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# An Irish Commonwealth



# AN IRISH COMMONWEALTH

BY

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# AN IRISH COMMONWEALTH

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## I.

### The Robbery of the Land

AN English Attorney-General in Ireland, Sir John Davies, writing in the reign of James I. said :—" There is no nation under the sun that love equal and indifferent justice better than the Irish, or will rest better satisfied with the execution thereof, although it be against themselves." Sir John Allen, English Master of the Rolls in Ireland, wrote to the Lord Deputy, Sir Anthony St. Leger, in 1537, that he " had been of this opinion ere now, that the Irish were more conformable to good order than diverse of the King's subjects, and kept their troths better." A still earlier writer, in the days of Henry VII., had reported :—" The laws and statutes made by the Irish on their hills they keep firm and staple, without breaking them for any favour or reward."

The law so made and kept by the Irish was a national code of great antiquity. It was developed during centuries, by a people distinguished for their law-abiding character. It has been described by Goldwin Smith, Professor of History at Oxford University, as "a precise and elaborate code, displaying something of that peculiar aptitude for the forms of legislation which the French Kelt has displayed in the Code Napoleon." It was expounded by trained lawyers, but it rested on the will of the whole people, and was the expression of their natural love of justice and freedom. As Mrs. Green has said in a memorable phrase, "the Irish people were themselves the guardians of their law and of their land." "There are four dignitaries of a territory who can be degraded," says the *Senchus Mor*, "a false-judging king, a stumbling bishop, a fraudulent poet, and an unworthy chieftain who does not fulfil his duties." According to Dr. Sigerson,

"There were two orders which took an equal rank with royalty: the order of learning as represented by a doctor of laws, and the order of religion as represented by a bishop. These being the king's equals, acted as a check upon his executive power. The code which ruled Ireland from the fifth to the seventeenth century was compiled and confirmed

in a council composed of three kings, three bishops, and three doctors learned in the laws. . . . The chieftain of a territory was chosen by the tribe as their principal or agent for certain purposes, and they endowed him with certain prerogatives. They could depose him for what the law defined as false judgment, and the office did not lapse as of right to his eldest son or to any of his children. He was a prince of the Irish, a 'Chieftain of the men of Erin,' but not a lord of the soil as now understood, with a right of ownership in the land so absolute as to mean occasionally supreme mastery over the lives and fortunes of its inhabitants."

The chief had for his support by virtue of his office a portion known as "mensal land," which when he died or ceased to be chief went by tanistry to his successor; and the nobles also held portions of land which descended to their children. The professional men—judges, physicians, poets, historians, and artificers—were also given portions of land in remuneration for their services. Parts of the land so held were let to tenants paying rent in kind. But all the rest, and by far the larger part, of the cultivated land belonged to the people as a whole and was called the "tribe land." Every free man had a right to his share of this land, paying to the chief a subsidy accord-

ing to his means, and owning his stock—cows and sheep, horses and oxen—or hiring it from the chief.

“When a céile or free tenant who held a part of the tribe land died, his farm did not go to his children; but all the tribe land belonging to the sept was redivided or ‘gavelled’ among the male adult members of the sept, including the dead man’s sons. . . . Yet they were not tenants at will, for they could not be disturbed till the time of redistribution; even then each man kept his crops and got compensation for unexhausted improvements; and though he gave up one farm he always got another. . . . The non-arable or waste land—mountain, forest, bog, etc.—was ‘commons land.’ This was not appropriated by individuals; but every free man had a right to use it for grazing, for procuring fuel, or for the chase.”—(P. W. Joyce, *Concise History of Ireland*.)

This system was fought for and clung to, against all attacks of violence and fraud. Two and a half centuries ago there were regularly-established Brehons or judges; and the abolition of the Irish laws and Irish judges was followed by the establishment of secret societies, which enforced the sentences of their own tribunals. The English policy was to rob the Irish people of their land and to give it to alien land-



lords under laws designed to destroy the Irish ways of life. English statutes denounced the Brehon tenure as "no law, but a lewd custom." But, as Mrs. Green says in *Irish Nationality*, "the claim of the commonalty to unalterable possession of their soil was deeply engraven in the hearts of the people, who stood together to hold their land, believing justice and law to be on their side and the right of near two thousand years of ordered possession." Throughout the long story of the appropriations by the Normans, the forfeitures and plantations under the Tudors and the Stuarts, the man-hunts under the Puritans, and the evictions of later days, the usurpers acquired no rightful title to the land of Ireland.

The English invaders not only looked to the rich lands of Ireland for plunder : they knew that so long as the old free Irish system of land tenure remained, their conquest could never be completed. Their object was to abolish Irish nationality, and make Ireland an English province. For this purpose it was necessary to blot out Irish institutions and usages. But while the people remained in possession of their land they maintained their ancient tenures. The English therefore set themselves to "exter-

minate and exile the country people of the Irishry." But the Irish people resisted "extermination," and the utmost force of the armed invaders failed to make good their claim to own the land "by right of conquest." From the beginning the English relied on trickery as well as on violence. King Henry II. landed in Dublin and pretended to make a bargain with a few Irish chiefs, by which he claimed to have become owner of the soil of Ireland. From the time of John the English Kings had assumed the title of Lord of Ireland. Henry VIII. had himself declared King of Ireland by a packed parliament in Dublin. War was alternated with the arts of peace—deceptions practised on the chiefs, and forfeiture of the lands of "traitors." A parliament sitting within the Pale by an Act passed in 1536 confiscated the lands of the Earl of Kildare, that is, the main part of Leinster. All the monasteries, except a few in remote places, were suppressed, and an Act of 1537 vested their lands in the King.

But while under Henry VIII. intermittent war was waged and chiefs were killed, banished and deposed, no deliberate attempt was made to expel the general body of occupiers of the land. Under his successors a change took place.



“ When a rebellious chief was reduced, the lands, not merely those in his own possession, but also those occupied by the whole of the people over whom he ruled, were confiscated—seized by the Crown—and given to English adventurers, undertakers as they were commonly called. These men got the lands on condition that they should bring in or plant on them a number of English or Scotch settlers; for whom it was of course necessary to clear off the native population.”—(P. W. Joyce, *Concise History of Ireland*.)

In 1548, after the banishment of O'More and O'Connor, an attempt was made to expel the occupiers of Leix and Offaly, and to settle English tenants in their place. The Irish resisted, and fighting went on with great loss of life during the reign of Edward VI. Queen Mary then appropriated the whole district as Crown property, and replanted it, in 1555 and 1556. But the people did not surrender their land without a desperate struggle, which lasted many years and only ended with their banishment or extermination.

Besides rapine and violence, there was, in the words of Professor Goldwin Smith, “ corruption; corruption in the vilest form.” During the Elizabethan era,

“ the eagles took wing for the Spanish main; the vultures descended upon Ireland. A daring use

of his sword procured for the adventurer in the Spanish colonies romantic wealth in the shape of ingots and rich bales; a dexterous use of intrigue, chicanery, and the art of inciting to rebellion, procured for the sharper in Ireland wealth less romantic, but more solid and lasting, in the shape of confiscated lands. The appearance of these adventurers, and the commencement of their hateful trade, made the war internecine."

Further schemes to confiscate and plant large districts provoked the frightful wars of extermination which were waged under Elizabeth. The English poet Spenser, who saw the state of Munster after these wars, described it thus :—

"Notwithstanding that the same was a most rich and plentiful country, full of corn and cattle, yet ere one year and a half they were there brought to such wretchedness, as that any stony heart would have rued the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glens they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs would not bear them; they looked like anatomies of death, they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves; and if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able long to continue therewithal; so that in short space there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentiful country suddenly left void of man and beast."

As a result of this war, the lands of the

Earl of Desmond and of one hundred and forty of his adherents, nearly a million acres in Munster, were confiscated in 1585. By proclamation made throughout England, estates were offered to "undertakers," who were to settle eighty-six English families on every 12,000 acres taken, and so in proportion for smaller estates down to 4,000 acres. Sir Walter Raleigh got 42,000 acres, and Edmund Spenser 12,000. But the settlers were continually attacked; many of them returned to England, and the rest received the Irish as tenants, contrary to the conditions. The scheme therefore failed in many of its objects.

The plantations were made by armed force. They were always resisted. The rightfulness of the forfeitures was never acknowledged: "the native occupants," in the words of the English historian, Hallam, "not acquiescing in this doctrine of our lawyers." The struggle of the Irish to recover their lands lasted for a century. Only a few out of the many plantations which were attempted can be referred to here. After the attainder of Shane O'Neill, more than half of Ulster was "presumed in law to be vacant," and the attempt was begun to clear off the occupiers and plant new settlers. Sidney relates how, in a belt

of land bordering on Lough Neagh, no Irish had been left alive. In 1570 the peninsula of Ardes in Down was granted to the Queen's secretary, Sir Thomas Smith, and a colony was planted; but the O'Neills of Clandeboy resisted and the scheme failed. In 1573 the Earl of Essex undertook to plant Antrim and the island of Rathlin, but after laying waste the country and depopulating it by the sword and starvation, he too failed. Under James I. great territories in Ulster were "forfeited" by Tyrone and Tyrconnel, and divided among adventurers, whose fortified houses, or bawns, shew the terms on which they lived with the neighbouring Irish.

With regard to the right or title of these settlers to the land of the Irish, the English historian, Goldwin Smith, says :—

“ It appears, to say the least, extremely doubtful whether the lands of Tyrone and Tyrconnel, on which the Ulster colony was planted, had been forfeited for any real offence, and whether the plot in which those noblemen were alleged to have been engaged, was not invented by the teeming brain of officials desirous of sharing their estates. They fled, it is true, but not from justice; for justice, when the forfeiture of land was in prospect, there was none. Spies were set to work to scent out plots, and find matter for charges of treason. But



there was a further question respecting these estates. When the chieftains of the septs O'More and O'Connor were attainted, in the reign of Mary, the septs pleaded that the chieftain could not by his attainder forfeit the sept land, which he had never possessed. It would, perhaps, have been difficult, at that time, in the case of any of the great forfeitures, to meet this plea. A feeling that the land was still theirs, and that they were unjustly kept out of their possessions, seems long to have survived these vast confiscations in the minds of the native proprietors; and perhaps it is not extinct even at the present day. . . .

“The disinheritance of the ancient race was carried on not only by high-handed violence, but by a system, which became a trade, of the meanest and most infamous chicane. A set of miscreants called Discoverers made it their business to spy out technical flaws in titles to land, in order that the estates might be judged to escheat to the Crown, from which grants of them were afterwards obtained, in many instances, by the informers or their employers. . . . It is not surprising that in these cases, again, ‘the native occupants’ should not have ‘acquiesced in the doctrine of our lawyers.’ Submit for the present they did. For they had been vanquished in the appeal to force. And if they were tempted to try their right in the courts of law, they found judges who were ministers of iniquity, and juries who gave their verdict, in cases where the Crown was a party, with the terrors of the Star Chamber hanging over their lands.

“ ‘ In the manuscripts of Bishop Sterne ’ (in Trinity College), says Leland, ‘ we find that in the small county of Longford, twenty-five of one sept were all deprived of their estates, without the least compensation, or any means of subsistence assigned to them.’ This appears to have been one of a number of cases in which the commissioners appointed to distribute the plantation lands had abused their trust, by wresting from the natives the lands, which the king, in marking out the plantations, had reserved for them. . . .

“ The case of the Byrnes of Wicklow, stated by Carte, was one in which, when chicanery had failed, worse instruments were employed to oust innocent men from their rightful inheritance. A criminal prosecution was commenced against the victims on fictitious grounds by Sir William Parsons and his accomplices in this infamous transaction, and evidence in support of the prosecution was not only raked up from most tainted sources, but wrung out by the use of atrocious tortures, a reluctant witness being placed naked on a burning gridiron, and put to the strappado. The Byrnes were at last released from prison; but their lands were never restored to them.”

When the power passed from Kings to Parliaments in England, the change made no difference in the English policy towards Ireland, described by Mrs. Green as “ the taking of all Irish land, the rooting out of the old race from the country ” :—



“What had once been widely diffused among the Irish tribes was gathered into the hands of a few aliens, who ruthlessly wasted the land for their own enrichment. Enormous profits fell to planters, who could get three times as much gain from an Irish as from an English estate by a fierce exploiting of the natural resources of the island and of its cheap outlawed labour. Forests of oak were hastily destroyed for quick profits; woods were cut down for charcoal to smelt the iron; the last furnace was put out in Kerry when the last wood had been destroyed. Where the English adventurer passed he left the land as naked as if a forest fire had swept over the country. . . . Three provinces had been largely planted by 1620—one still remained. By a prodigious fraud James I., and after him Charles I. in violation of his solemn promise, proposed to extirpate the Irish from Connaught.\* The maddened people were driven to arms in 1641. Instantly London City, and a House of Commons consisting mainly of Puritan adventurers joined in speculations to buy up “traitors’ lands,” openly sold in London at £100 for a thousand acres in Ulster or for six hundred in Munster, and so on in every province. The more rebels the more

\*Speaking of Strafford, Goldwin Smith says: “His government was tainted by a most sinister object, in the pursuit of which he carried forward on a scale worthy of his greatness as a power of evil, the legal confiscation of land. The whole province of Connaught was marked out for spoliation by his majestic rapine; the pretext being that when the lands of that province had been surrendered to the Crown and re-granted, the grants had not been formally enrolled, though a large sum had been paid in fees for their enrolment.”

forfeitures, and every device of law and fraud was used to fling the whole people into the war, either in fact or in name, and so destroy the claim of the whole of them to their lands. . . . The speculators got their lands, outcast women and children lay on the wayside devoured by wolves and birds of prey. By order of parliament (1653) over 20,000 destitute men, women and children were sold into the service of English planters in Virginia and the Carolinas. Slave-dealers were let loose over the country, and the Bristol merchants did good business."

In 1653 the English Parliament announced that the survivors of the Irish might live between the Shannon and the Atlantic. But soon afterwards Leitrim and Sligo were taken from them and assigned to Cromwell's veterans.

"This devastation," says Dr. Sigerson, "was made in order that Cromwell might satisfy the adventurers who advanced money to carry on the war in Ireland, and content the army for their arrears of pay by the grant of lands. It might be expected that the result of this settlement would have been to establish a sturdy yeomanry in the confiscated provinces at least. But we find that the officers were as rapacious as any of their predecessors. They bought up for trifling sums the debentures of their men, . . . and sometimes the soldiers coming to settle were shewn a desolate bog instead of their fertile allotment, and were glad to give it up for horses to ride off on."

After the war following the Revolution of 1688 it appeared that more than a million Irish acres, or about seventeen hundred thousand English acres, had been “forfeited.” About a fourth of these lands was to be restored to the former proprietors according to the Treaty of Limerick. Nearly all the rest had been bestowed by William III. on his personal friends—Albemarle, Romney, and Woodstock, the eldest son of Portland; and smaller grants had been made to the foreigners who had assisted William in the war—to the Dutchman Ginkell, with the title of Earl of Athlone, and to the Frenchman Rouvigny, with the title of Earl of Galway. Commissioners put the value of these lands at about two millions six hundred thousand pounds. But the English House of Commons refused to recognise this exercise of the royal prerogative. In Macaulay’s phrase, they “went to work with the double eagerness of rapacity and of animosity.” Their aim was partly to benefit their own favourites, and partly to relieve the English taxpayer from the burden of debt due to the war. A Resumption Bill was brought in, annulling the grants of William, and vesting the for-

feited lands in trustees. After an unseemly squabble the Bill was passed. But the position of the Irish was not affected for the better by these struggles over the plunder, or by any change in their masters which resulted.

“In Ireland,” says Macaulay, “there was peace. The domination of the colonists was absolute. The native population was tranquil with the ghastly tranquillity of exhaustion and of despair”; but there was no change in “that intense antipathy, compounded of hatred, fear, and scorn, with which they were regarded by the Cromwellian who dwelt among them.” “Nor was this submission the effect of content, but of mere stupefaction and brokenness of heart.” “There were indeed Irish Roman Catholics of great ability, energy, and ambition; but they were to be found everywhere except in Ireland. . . . One exile became a Marshal of France. Another became Prime Minister of Spain. If he had stayed in his native land he would have been regarded as an inferior by all the ignorant and worthless squireens who had signed the Declaration against Transubstantiation. . . . These men, the natural chiefs of their race, having



been withdrawn, what remained were utterly helpless and passive.”†

After the season of storms, winter sets in with ominous quiet. The numb agony of frost and desolation is uninviting to contemplate: the sounds of a people's sufferings are muffled in history. The nation's own voice is stilled; and the authors of the ruin might well turn from contemplating the results of their work. Historians are wont to dwell on dramatic episodes and great personalities, which fill their pages with pictures. Battle, murder and sudden death are sure of adequate description. But when the clash of arms has died away; when we have had our fill of the details of slaughter and famine, of attainder and confiscation; comparatively little attention is paid to the quieter process by which the limbs of the Irish nation were stretched upon the Procrustean bed of English law. There are changes which cause but little commotion on the surface, but which by constant

†John Stuart Mill, in his pamphlet, *England and Ireland*, written in 1868, summarised the position thus:—“According to a well-known computation, the whole land of Ireland had been confiscated three times over. Part had been taken to enrich powerful Englishmen and their Irish adherents; part to form the endowment of a hostile hierarchy; the rest had been given away to English and Scotch colonists, who held, and were intended to hold, it as a garrison against the Irish.”



pressure mould the daily life of the multitude. Such developments are of the utmost importance for students who are concerned with the past history, present condition, and future fortunes of a people. But they do not lend themselves to picturesque narrative, and are therefore liable to be neglected by writers and readers.

Accordingly we find only passing references to an Act of 1569, which reduced all Ireland to shire land. Where alien colonies took root, it might be expected that an attempt would be made to plant alien law also. But the Act of 1569 affected all the rest of Ireland : it abrogated the agreements which had been made by the Crown with the chiefs, and took away the protection which the peasantry had enjoyed under the old Irish law. " It is easy to imagine," says Dr. Sigerson, " how bitterly they would dislike the change which, for an elective chieftain, gave them an absolute lord, suppressed their constitutional checks of judge and priest, and concentrated in the hands of one master the power to create tenures, to evict, and to pass judgment as it seemed best for his own interests."

James I. continued the task of reducing Ireland to shireland, and extending, for-

mally at any rate, the operation of English law throughout the country.

“A judgment of the King’s Bench,” says Goldwin Smith, “amounting to a legislative measure, swept away the whole of the Brehon tenures of land, with the relations between chieftain and clansman which they involved; and substituted for them the English tenure of land, with primogeniture, and the regular relations between landlord and tenant. The chiefs gained a boon by having their demesne lands and their territorial rights made hereditary instead of elective; while the Government naturally regarded the English as the only civilised and lawful tenure, and deemed that the grand object of all Irish policy was accomplished by transferring the allegiance of the clansman from the chieftain to the law.”

It is here that historical judgment is liable to be warped by personal prejudice and national bias. Past events are coloured by the opinions of the present. Writers who are committed to the maintenance of the existing political system and are prepossessed in favour of vested interests, tend to represent the course of events as leading to a conclusion desirable, or at any rate tolerable—inevitable, or, at any rate, final and unquestionable. This tendency is strongest where the interests at stake are greatest and where passions run most deep, as in questions concerning land and

national life. When it touches such topics, history too often becomes a partisan attempt to divert attention from the conflict of class privilege with social well-being, and to obscure the continual struggle between English and Irish ways of life.

Apart from any question as to the right of the English to sweep away Irish land tenure, it was a doubtful boon to the chiefs to be made landlords in the English sense, instead of leaders holding their lands from the community by virtue of their elective office. It was certainly no boon to the clansmen to exchange their ancient rights for "the regular relations between landlord and tenant." In India also the English conquerors "naturally regarded the English as the only civilised and lawful tenure," and with the same injustice and disastrous results Lord Cornwallis, by the "permanent settlement" in Bengal, gave to the village headmen proprietary rights in the soil which had previously belonged to the village community. Those words, "the regular relations between landlord and tenant," have an ominous sound in Irish ears. As to the accomplishment of the grand object of transferring the allegiance of the people to the law, this phrase may have been used as a polite euphemism or to express a pious

hope : but it sounds to-day more like a scathing sarcasm. It is certain that the words convey no historical truth : three centuries have seen no transfer of the people's allegiance to the English law in Ireland. The candid historian would have recognised it as his duty to brand these proceedings as the wrongful destruction of the native code to which the naturally law-abiding Irish were loyal, and to acknowledge the folly and the failure of the attempt to impose on them an alien law which had no claim to their allegiance, and to which they never have been and never will be loyal.

As to the attractions which the English law might be expected to have for the Irish, Goldwin Smith speaks candidly elsewhere in the same essay :—

“ We have seen how much the law, and the ministers of the law, had done to deserve the peasant's love. We have seen too in what successive guises property [*i.e.* the English system of landlordism] had presented itself to his mind ; first as open rapine, then as robbery carried on through the roguish technicalities of an alien code, finally as legalized and systematised oppression.

“ The idea that the English Government deliberately excluded the Irish from the pale of humanity vanishes away. Nevertheless, those who are disposed to regard the Irish as inherently lawless, will do well to remember the historical rela-



tions between that people and the English law. Aliens to it for four centuries, they subsequently experienced it not as a beneficent and protecting power, but as an evil mystery of iniquitous technicalities, a cold craft which disinherited them of their lands in a manner at once more systematic and more hateful than the conqueror's sword.

"The Cromwellian landowners soon lost their religious character, while they retained all the hardness of the fanatic, and the feelings of Puritan conquerors towards a conquered Catholic people. Their descendants became probably the very worst upper class with which a country was ever afflicted. Fortunately their profligacy was sure, in the end, to work, to a certain extent, its own cure; and in the background of their swinish and uproarious drinking bouts, the Encumbered Estates Act rises to our view."

But, even so, half the story is left untold. However well merited these denunciations may be, they leave out of sight the real reason why the attempt to impose English law upon Ireland was doomed to such lamentable failure. The failure of that attempt cannot be attributed solely to the specially barbarous methods by which landlordism was introduced and maintained in Ireland. The true reason of that failure must be found partly in the evil of landlordism itself, but mainly in the fact that it was opposed to the polity which was



native in the country, which suited the people's way of life, and to which they freely gave allegiance as the spontaneous outcome of the racial instinct for social organisation. It is not enough to describe the outrages committed in the name of the foreign law. Side by side with that story, the impartial historian should set out the unswerving devotion of the Irish people to the relics and tradition of their old rights to land and liberty,—their ceaseless efforts to oppose a counter-organisation to the foreign tyranny, and to give shape to a juster social law for their own protection.

“We had true rural communities in ancient Ireland,” says Æ. “The members of a clan had common interests. They owned the land in common.” When the ancient clans were destroyed, “there was no longer a common interest, a social order turning their minds to larger than individual ends.” All political and economic forces tended to isolate farmers and labourers from one another and from the nation. But with indomitable courage and resource they continued the struggle, and clung together instinctively to preserve possession of their native soil. For this purpose they formed societies, secretly when overmastered by force, openly when their strength returned,

but always independently of the English law and in defiance of its bayonets and bullets. Goldwin Smith himself says : " In plain truth, the secret tribunals which administered the Whiteboy code were to the people the organs of a wild law of social morality, by which on the whole the interest of the peasant was protected."

It should also be noticed that English denunciations of landlordism in Ireland are carefully confined to a vague past, and are skilfully combined with a condonation of its existence for the time being. " The existing settlement of land in Ireland," summed up the learned Professor Goldwin Smith to the complacent jury of the British public, " may be considered as placed beyond discussion in the estimation of all sane men; and, this being the case, it is safe to observe that no inherent want of respect for property is shewn by the Irish people if a proprietorship which had its origin within historical memory in flagrant wrong, is less sacred in their eyes than it would be if it had its origin in immemorial right." The truth about the past is admitted, not so much because it is the truth, as because it is safe to admit it, and because the admission may even be helpful to the dominant purpose of representing the present régime as

beyond reproach or even question. An atmosphere of apparent candour is created, in order to make the palliation of existing circumstances the more plausible. The dark doings of the past serve as a foil to set off the contemporary brightness of the "blessings of the British constitution."

It appears strange to-day that a historian surveying the situation even as it was in 1862 should have declared "a legalised and systematised oppression" to be sacrosanct, or should have satisfied himself that it was working out its own cure in the Encumbered Estates Act. But the later developments, which will be dealt with in the next chapter, demonstrate still more clearly, not only the iniquity, but the impossibility of riveting alien laws upon a people with its own traditions and ideals. For the end of the long conflict is now no longer in doubt. It is impossible to-day to deny the right of a nation to order its own life. As Æ has said :—

"Now that the hammer of Thor is wrecking our civilizations, is destroying the body of European nationalities, the spirit is freer to re-shape the world nearer to the heart's desire. Necessity will drive us along with the rest to recast our social order and to fix our ideals. . . .

"Civilizations are externalizations of the soul

and character of races. . . . If there is anything in the theory of Irish nationality, we will apply original principles as they are from time to time discovered to be fundamental in Irish character.

“It is difficult to define national character, even in long-established States whose history lies open to the world; but it is most difficult in Ireland, which for centuries has not acted by its own free will from its own centre, where national activity was mainly by way of protest against external domination, or a re-adjustment of itself to external power. We can no more deduce the political character of the Irish from the history of the past seven hundred years than we can estimate the quality of genius in an artist whom we have only seen when grappling with a burglar. The political character of a people emerges only when they are shaping in freedom their own civilization. To get a clue in Ireland we must slip by those seven centuries of struggle and study national origins, as the lexicographer, to get the exact meaning of a word, traces it to its derivation. The greatest value our early history and literature has for us is the value of a clue to character, to be returned to again and again in the maze of our infinitely more complicated life and era.

“There is, I believe, a powerful Irish character which has begun to reassert itself in modern times, and this character is in essentials what it was two thousand years ago. We discover its first manifestation in the ancient clans. The clan was at once aristocratic and democratic. It was aristo-



cratic in leadership and democratic in its economic basis. The most powerful character was elected as chief, while the land was the property of the clan. That social order indicates the true political character of the Irish. . . . That peculiar character, I believe, still persists among our people in the mass, and it is by adopting a policy which will enable it to manifest once more that we will create an Irish civilization which will fit our character as the glove fits the hand. . . .

“It is certain that democracy will prevail in Ireland. The aristocratic classes with traditions of government, the manufacturing classes with economic experience, will alike be secondary in Ireland to the small farmers and the wage-earners in the towns. . . . Necessity and our own hearts should lead us to a brotherhood in industry. . . . It may be that we shall find the ancient ways to be the true ways.”

The present writer begs leave to subscribe to this noble plea. He too would urge that in seeking to give substance to the ideal of brotherhood in industry, present policy should be guided by the traditions of the race and be based upon the native usages, whose free development was forcibly interrupted by an alien system of legalised wrong. For the liberty taken in collecting and transcribing the above extracts, the only excuse he can offer is that they express, far better than he could, the pregnant idea of



truth to type in national development, and that they suggest some further applications of that idea.

For example, instead of "slipping by the seven centuries of struggle," Æ. might have indicated the persistence of character, running like a thread through the whole of Irish history. The national spirit may have been faint and gasping, but it was never extinguished. The Irish were Irish during the long years of repression, as they were before and will be after. In resistance to external domination, their activity was essentially the same as it was, and will be, in the free exercise of self-determination. The episodes of agrarian struggle and political revolt may not appeal so much to Æ's. temper as the ancient idyll of tribal felicity and the modern ideal of a hive of co-operators busy for the common good. Absorbed in his poetical vision of the past, and in his practical zeal for industrial organisation to-day, he seems to overlook the significance of the historical struggle of the Irish for the right to live as individuals and as a nation—for the control of the land, which is the first necessity of existence, and of the laws, which form the framework of society.

It may be true that in co-operation, as in

other ways, "Ireland has begun to swing back to its traditional and natural communism in work." But if we are "to discover the ideas which lie at the root of national character, and so inculcate those principles that they will pervade the nation and make it a spiritual solidarity," we must dig deeper and broader, and lay the foundations more firmly than in the plans of the Agricultural Organisation Society. If there is to be a true brotherhood, the rights of all must be secured on a juster economic basis than exists to-day, and by laws more consonant with Irish character. The best schemes for producing wealth from land must fail unless land can be got on fair terms; and the wealth produced will be diverted from those who earn it if they have to pay a tribute for the right to work. The Irish spirit of live and let live; the ideal of social harmony combined with individual freedom, and of evenly diffused prosperity co-existing with loyalty to natural leadership; mutual respect for one another's rights as based on recognised principles of justice; the rule of sociability and common sense in daily life, are incompatible with the power of some to deprive others of access to the only sources of livelihood.

In "offering thoughts on the national being on an Irish polity," Æ. warns us that his book is "not to be taken as an attempt to deal with more than a few essentials." The present writer in his turn is attempting nothing more; and his object also is "to start thought and discussion upon the principles which should prevail in an Irish civilization." But he cannot believe that Irish civilization can be restored merely, or mainly, by organising co-operative societies within the existing law. The evil lies deeper, and the remedy must cut down to its roots—to the economic conditions which cannot be altered without altering the law. Social ideals can only take shape in an actual polity when the people as a whole are masters of their destiny. The writer therefore proposes not to dwell on methods of industry which are a matter of choice and should be developed as experience dictates; but rather to fix attention on the principles which are the necessary framework of an Irish polity, and which must be established by the act of the nation as the foundation of its being.

"The most powerful character was elected as chief, while the land was the property of the clan." The ancient ways are the true ways. To-day, as two thousand

years ago, the executors of the national will must be freely chosen; and allegiance will be gladly given to them if they are faithful to their trust. But the terms of that trust are as clear and unalterable to-day as they have been throughout Irish history—that the land of Ireland belongs to the Irish people. That right was never lawfully abrogated, never renounced under torture. To maintain that claim has been the settled resolve of the people, even when their leaders were negligent or lukewarm in defending it. The subordination of all private interests and of all executive authority to this principle was the essential characteristic of the old social order in Ireland. “In our much more complicated day and era,” it is still more necessary to establish this principle as the basis of justice and freedom, the indispensable condition of general prosperity and national unity. Privileged wrong, resting on force, must give way to the common rights of all, resting on consent. The enjoyment by each of his birthright—his share of the national inheritance—must be secured, on terms fair to all, by a joint control of the land in accordance with the political character of the people.



## II.

### The Struggle against Landlordism

THE natural sociability of the Irish has been seen in their friendly relations with other races. Abroad, Irish saints, scholars and traders were welcomed everywhere in Europe; Irish exiles have led the armies, and directed the policies, of great foreign nations. At home, the hospitality of the Irish is proverbial. According to the Venerable Bede, it was customary for the English, from the highest to the lowest, to retire to Ireland for study and devotion, and they were all hospitably received and supplied gratuitously with food, books and instruction. From very early times Norse and Anglo-Saxon settlers established themselves amicably in Ireland. The Danes and Normans who remained there became "more Irish than the Irish themselves." Under the influence of Irish ways, Geraldines, de Burgos, and Butlers were changed from enemies into friends, from foreigners into Irishmen. Fighting there was in Ireland, as elsewhere, in those days; but the social



life of the people continued with less disturbance than in other parts of Europe.

But when the Brehon law was abolished, the old social unity was broken up; and the Irish nation no longer had the same means of digesting and assimilating an influx of foreign settlers. When the clearances began, friendly relations ceased to be possible. The intruders formed an anti-social class, which could not be absorbed into Irish life. They were concerned not to maintain, but to destroy, the usages on which unity and order depended. Avarice was their dominant motive, and their power as lords of the soil was such as had never been known in Ireland. In the pursuit of their ends, and in the exercise of their powers, they were checked neither by any regard in themselves for right, nor by any authority over them able to enforce it. In the Remonstrance which the Irish addressed to Pope John XXII., they spoke of "the English who inhabit our island, and call themselves a middle nation (between English and Irish)": "they have exterminated our native virtues and replaced them by abominable vices."

In order to break up the clans and obtain possession of their lands, their crops were destroyed by harrows made for the purpose,

and plans were laid for weakening their resistance by artificial famines. In the words of Sir Arthur Chichester :—" I have often said and written, it is famine that must consume the Irish, as our swords and other endeavours worked not that speedy effect which is expected." On the other hand the lot of the poor on the estates of the foreign landlords was equally devoid of any legal protection or humane consideration. They were kept, according to Sir John Davies, as mere tenants at will or tenants in villenage, and oppressed by many exactions. Feudalism was only established in so far as it gave the landlord power and privilege. The " middle nation " resolutely withstood the introduction of any law except in so far as they could mould and manipulate it for their own ends. Under James I.'s plantation scheme, some of the Irish were to be made proprietors, but the " middle nation " by fraud or violence deprived them of most of the land which had been reserved for them.

" Had the plantation scheme," says Dr. Siger-  
son, " been honestly carried out amongst the Irish,  
it would, nevertheless, have greatly altered their  
condition for the worse. A certain number of  
chiefs, no doubt, might have profited. They  
would have been transformed from elected

ministers of the people into their masters and the lords of their soil. The clan would have been, as it were, uprooted and reduced to a state of vassalage. To this, as it was, the people were depressed, after many vain but desperate struggles: they had to accept whatever terms were offered them; and where their lives had been accounted of so little value, their property-rights were ignored. They knew the soil and how to cultivate it; and they were powerless to resist the heaviest exaction. Thus they were allowed to work even on the lands of their alien task-masters."

For the same reason, when Cromwell drove the Irish into Connacht, some of the common people, who had escaped death or shipment as slaves, were allowed to remain. All the proprietors of the other three provinces were driven out, and all of humbler rank who had performed any military duty. But "to a great extent, the natives were allowed to cultivate the soil, and even encouraged to live sparsely on roots, fruit, and milk, in order that they might make the land produce grain which their landlord could appropriate. They could hardly call their lives their own, much less their labours."

Such further forfeiture as followed the Revolution of 1688 only renewed and intensified the old evils. The Irish who were not

slaughtered or exiled, continued to cultivate the soil in a state of serfdom; and where alien tenants had been planted, better favoured by the law, they gradually disappeared and were replaced by Irish tenants who, accustomed to ill-treatment and sparse fare, gave the landlord less trouble and more rent. Religious differences embittered the work of extermination and subjection, but the prime and persistent cause of strife and misery was the greed of the "middle nation," and the anarchy and demoralisation on which it fed. Landlordism was the poisonous irritant which pervaded the body politic and produced the varied symptoms of discord and decay. For the introduction of this virus into Irish society, England claims and is entitled to the credit. "Millions of English money," says Macaulay proudly, "had been expended in the struggle. It was owing to the exertions and sacrifices of the English people that, from the basaltic pillars of Ulster to the lakes of Kerry, the Saxon settlers were trampling on the children of the soil."

"There was peace in Ireland." When actual war ceased, economic forces came fully into play. Without being at war with the people, the settlers could reduce them to the barest subsistence, and deprive them



even of that. In the exercise of their legal powers, the landlords could not only dictate how the Irish should live in Ireland, but could deny them the right to live there at all. In Swift's description we find already the familiar picture :

“ Another cause of this nation's misery is that Egyptian bondage of cruel, oppressing, and covetous landlords, expecting all who live under them should make bricks without straw; who grieve and envy when they see a tenant of their own in a whole coat, or able to afford one comfortable meal in a month, by which the spirits of the people are broken, and made fit for slavery. . . . And these cruel landlords are every day unpeopling the kingdom by forbidding their miserable tenants to till the earth, against common reason and justice, and contrary to the practice and prudence of other nations, by which numberless families have been forced either to leave the kingdom or stroll about and increase the numbers of our thieves and beggars.”

The history of the next two centuries consists of variations on this theme. “ In the second decade of the eighteenth century,” says Mr. J. W. Good in *Ulster and Ireland*, “ as leases began to fall in, the landlords levied fines for their renewal which the tenants were wholly unable to pay. Cattle-raising was believed to be a more profitable speculation than tillage,



with the result that 'in some of the finest counties, in many places, there was neither house nor cornfield to be seen in ten or fifteen miles travelling.' . . . . The history of Ulster during the greater part of the eighteenth century is a melancholy anticipation of the history of Connaught since the Famine. Between Christmas, 1728, and Christmas, 1729, 5,655 Irish, practically all of whom were Presbyterians, arrived in Pennsylvania alone; and eight years later it was reported that 1,000 families had assembled in Belfast waiting for conveyance across the Atlantic. After the famine of 1740 the tide flowed stronger than ever; and for several years the average number of emigrants leaving Ulster for the plantations rose as high as 12,000 annually. From 1771 to 1773, when Lord Donegall and Mr. Upton were 'clearing' their Antrim estates, no fewer than 30,000 people, 'all Protestants and Protestant dissenters,' as they described themselves, set sail for America." Under "the landowning and Episcopalian aristocracy who held the reins of power, the majority of Protestants and Catholics alike were robbed, persecuted, and degraded for the benefit of an insignificant minority."

Thus the wrong in which landlordism originated was maintained in the methods

by which the landlords, those “vermin of the kingdom,” as the Englishman Arthur Young called them, exercised their power. In his *Tour in Ireland*, written in 1776, he says : “A landlord in Ireland can scarcely invent an order which a servant, labourer or cottar dares to refuse to execute. Nothing satisfies him but complete submission.” War has its respites, and military conquerors may temper tyranny with justice or mercy ; but the economic screw never relaxes, and there is no check on the greed and cruelty of the legalised monopolist. Resident landlords squandered the wealth of the country in riot ; the absentees drained it away as foreign tribute. Between landlords and middlemen, tithe-proctors and tax-gatherers, the tenants were ground to dust. Lord Charlemont, affectionately described by Lord Macaulay as “the virtuous and accomplished Charlemont, a Whig of the Whigs,” summed up the position as he saw it :—

“Exorbitant rents, low wages, want of employment in a country destitute of manufactures, where desolation and famine were the effects of fertility ; where the rich gifts of a bountiful mother were destructive to her children, and served only to tantalize them ; where oxen supplied the place of men, and by leaving little room for cultivation,

while they enriched their pampered owners, starved the miserable remnant of thinly scattered inhabitants: farms of enormous extent, let by their rapacious and indolent proprietors to monopolizing land-jobbers, by whom small portions of them were again let and re-let to intermediate oppressors, and by them sub-divided for five times their value, among the wretched starvers upon potatoes and water: taxes yearly increasing, and tithes which the Catholic, without any possible benefit, unwillingly pays in addition to his priest-money: misery, oppression, and famine.”

While the people were blackmailed and evicted in the name of law, their remaining rights of common were taken from them by barefaced robbery. “Until the beginning of the latter half of the eighteenth century,” says a writer in *Nationality*, “commonages for grazing existed throughout Munster, and free bogs, from which the fuel of the people could be taken for the labour involved, were frequent. Without any claim in law or justice, the Munster landlords proceeded to enclose the commonages and charge rent for grazing, and to seize and place guards over the free bogs and compel the unfortunate people to pay for their usage. This high-handed robbery of the farmers and labourers reduced the poorest class to the last extreme of misery. They assembled and tore down the walls and

fences enclosing the commonages. The English Government retorted with the infamous Act making the 'malicious prostration of a wall' a matter of imprisonment for life and public whipping. To break up the Whiteboys, the Castle proclaimed martial law, and arrested and hanged right, left and centre. Whiteboyism and the long train of similar secret agrarian societies thus had their origin in the open robbery of the poorest of the Irish peasantry."

The wantonness of landlord tyranny in Ulster helped to form the people into the ranks of the Irish Volunteers. "The menace of the Volunteers," says Mr. Good, "forced Great Britain to grant nominal independence to the Irish Parliament, but by denying popular opinion power to influence that Parliament, she ensured not only the maintenance of her own supremacy, but the final defeat of the hopes of Grattan and his fellows. . . . The Union did less than nothing to improve the relations between landlord and tenant. . . . On the contrary, the authors of the Act were determined to stereotype existing relations, and their successors set themselves to tilt the balance still more strongly against the occupiers of land." A movement for the extension of the



Ulster custom of fixity of tenure and free sale to other parts of Ireland was furiously denounced by the landlords, and met by a counter-demand for the complete destruction of the custom.

Modern landlordism thus shewed itself, naked and unashamed. The gang of national neuters and social parasites, like drones devoured the honey of the workers, and with the obstinacy of mules stood between the people and the possibility of order and progress. They fomented strife on the principle of *divide et impera*. Their sons organised "factions" and led them on to sanguinary frays. Some writers have attributed these "faction-fights" to ancient tribal jealousies. But as Dr. Sigerson pointed out, the leaders in the faction-fights were aliens, and the landlord magistrates encouraged the strife. Sir John Howley, Chairman of the County of Tipperary, in the reign of William IV., relates that at the Quarter Sessions in Nenagh a young man who had committed a murder at a faction-fight was returned for trial for manslaughter only. He was found guilty, and Sir John Howley was about to pronounce sentence, when one of the Magistrates requested him to confer with them. "I turned round to speak to them and you may

guess my astonishment when I heard them all urge the necessity of inflicting on the man convicted of aggravated manslaughter only a mere nominal punishment. When I asked what they meant by 'necessity' they frankly declared that they could not live in the country unless the system of faction-fights were kept up, as they believed it was necessary for their own safety to have the people divided."

Hitherto the wholesale ejecting of tenants which had taken place in Ulster had not extended to other parts of Ireland. During the Napoleonic wars there was a great demand for grain, and large profits could be made out of the work of an industrious and frugal tenantry. But when peace came, the profits of tillage fell, and the process began of clearing off the people to make room for the bullocks. Landlords had previously found some advantage in keeping tenants whom they converted into forty-shilling freeholders to vote them into places of profit. The Catholic Relief Act gave the upper-class Catholics opportunities for sharing in the spoil as landowners and office-holders; but by the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders, the mass of the tenantry ceased to be voters, and landlords had no longer any political reason for

retaining them on their estates. Conscious of their position as a garrison in a hostile country, they saw in the movement for Catholic relief signs of national re-awakening. Fear intensified the old animosity, and excited in them a new anxiety to be beforehand with their possible enemies.

The provocation of religious animosity was always recognised by the English Government as a means of dividing the people and maintaining the alien domination; and the landlords in Ireland always relied on obtaining encouragement and help from England in the cause of religious ascendancy. In some cases fanaticism took the form of local purges of Catholics and attempts to plant Protestants only in their place. Landlords assumed the function of missionaries, and when tenants declined to be converted, they were driven from the cabins they had built and the land they had tilled on the mountain side, to face once more the raw bog on the edge of the Atlantic. The Catholic Relief Act was at once followed by the first Act passed for making the process of eviction cheaper and easier through the medium of landlord-manned Quarter Sessions; and that Act was quickly improved on by a series of further amending Acts.

“ To pay rent and taxes in England,” says Mrs. J. R. Green, “ the toilers raised stores of corn and cattle for export there, from the value of eight million pounds in 1826 to seventeen million pounds of foodstuffs in 1848, and so on. They grew potatoes to feed themselves. If the price of corn fell prodigiously—as at the end of the Napoleonic war, or at the passing of the Corn Laws in England—the cheaper bread was no help to the peasants, most of whom could never afford to eat it; it only doubled their labour to send out greater shiploads of provisions for the charges due in England. On the other hand, if potatoes rotted, famine swept over the country among its fields of corn and cattle. And when rent failed, summary powers of eviction were given at Westminster under English theories for use in Ireland alone; ‘and if anyone would defend his farm it is here denominated rebellion.’ Families were flung on the bogs and mountain sides to gather chickweed, sorrel, and seaweed, and to sink under the fevers that followed vagrancy, starvation, cold, and, above all, the broken hearts of men hunted from their homes. In famine time the people to save themselves from death were occasionally compelled to use blood taken from live bullocks boiled up with a little oatmeal; and the appalling sight was seen of feeble women gliding across the country with their pitchers, actually trampling upon fertility and fatness, to collect in the corner of a grazier’s farm for their little portion of blood. Five times between 1822 and 1837 there were famines of lesser degree; but two others, 1817 and 1847, were noted as among the half-dozen most



terrible recorded in Europe and Asia during the century. From 1846 to 1848 over a million lay dead of hunger, while in a year foodstuffs for seventeen million pounds were sent to England. English soldiers guarded from the starving the fields of corn and the wagons that carried it to the ports; herds of cattle were shipped, and skins of asses which had served the famishing for food. New evictions on an enormous scale followed the famine, the clearance of what was then called in the phrase of current English economics 'the surplus population,' 'the overstock tenantry.' They died or fled in hosts to America—Ireland pouring out on one side her great stores of 'surplus food,' and on the other her 'surplus people,' for whom there was nothing to eat. In the twenty years that followed, the men and women who had fled to America sent back some thirteen millions to keep a roof over the heads of the old and the children they had left behind. It was a tribute for the landlords' pocket—a rent which could never have been paid from the land they leased."

The pæan of triumphant landlordism was chanted by the *London Times* thus:—

"Law has ridden roughshod through Ireland: it has been taught with bayonets and interpreted with ruin. Townships levelled with the ground, straggling columns of exiles, workhouses multiplied and still crowded, express the determination of the legislature to rescue Ireland from its slovenly old barbarism, and to plant the institutions of this more civilised land."

The horrors of the famine period were such as the Leaders of Irish patriotism were powerless to avert. The Young Ireland movement, under Thomas Davis, John Mitchel, Gavan Duffy, and others, revived the spirit of nationhood, and passed on the torch of freedom to future generations. Mitchel's trial and sentence as a common felon in 1848 is one of the great scenes in the drama of Irish history. After his conviction Mitchel reminded the Government of his previous declaration that he would compel them to treat Ireland as a conquered country. In the next generation this seed bore its fruit in Fenianism; but for the moment the mass of the people were shattered by their sufferings. James Fintan Lalor called attention to the immediate cause of those sufferings. He summarised his opinions as follows :—

“ 1.—That in order to save their own lives, the occupying tenants of the soil of Ireland ought, next autumn, to refuse all rent and arrears of rent then due, beyond and except the value of the overplus of harvest produce remaining in their hands after having deducted and reserved a due and full provision for their own subsistence during the ensuing twelve months.

“ 2.—That they ought to refuse and resist being made beggars, landless and houseless, under the English law of ejectment.

“3.—That they ought further, *on principle*, to refuse all rent to the present usurping proprietors until the people, the true proprietors (or lords paramount in legal parlance) have in national congress or convention, decided what rents they are to pay, and *to whom* they are to pay them.

“4.—And that the people on grounds of *policy* and *economy*, ought to decide (as a general rule, admitting of reservations) that these rents shall be paid *to themselves*, the people, for public purposes, and for behoof and benefit of them, the entire general people.”

Lalor denounced landlordism as the direct cause of the people's agony, and pointed to the only remedy—the control by the nation of the use of its own soil for the benefit of the whole people. He expounded with matchless force and clearness the ethics of the land question. Writing in John Martin's *Irish Felon*, he said :—

“I acknowledge no right of property in a small class which goes to abrogate the rights of a numerous people. I acknowledge no right of property in eight thousand persons, be they noble or ignoble, which takes away all right of property, security, independence, and existence itself, from a population of eight millions, and stands in bar to all the political rights of this island and all the social rights of its inhabitants. I acknowledge no right of property which takes the food of millions and gives them a famine, which denies to the

peasant the right of a home and concedes, in exchange, the right of a workhouse. I deny and challenge all such rights, however founded or enforced. I challenge them as founded only on the code of the brigand and enforced only by the sanction of the hangman. Against them I assert the true and indefeasible right of property—the right of our people to live in this land and possess it; to live in it in comfort, security, and independence; and to live in it by their own labour, on their own land, as God and nature meant them to do. Against them I shall array, if I can, all the forces that yet remain in this island. And against them I am determined to make war, to their destruction or my own.”

Lalor was imprisoned, but had to be released from illness to die in 1849. In 1852 “The Tenant League of North and South” was organised by Gavan Duffy and others, and the “Tenants Charter” became the chief popular demand in Ireland. The attempt to win reform by constitutional agitation through the English Parliament broke down, demoralised and betrayed, as usual, by the subtle poison of parliamentary influence. But the Fenian movement and the I.R.B. under James Stephens, by relying on the “common people,” and organising the assistance of Irish exiles, brought two fresh elements of strength into the contest.



Meanwhile evictions continued. These evictions, like the earlier clearances, were carried out by armed force, against the resistance of the people. They were effected in the name of English law, but the rightfulness of the rent tyranny, with its alternatives of blackmail or ejection by the "crowbar brigade," was never acknowledged. Isaac Butt in his *Plea for the Celtic Race* wrote :—

"Let any man tell me the difference between an expulsion of the whole population of the highland regions of Glenbeigh by a squadron of Cromwell's troopers in 1650, and an expulsion of its population in 1858 by the man who has inherited or purchased Cromwell's patent. The very 'pomp and circumstance' are the same. Military force ejects the people now, as it would have done then. The bayonets of the soldiery drive now as they did then the old population from their homes. Cruel men come now as they would have done then, and, amid the wailing of women and the cries of children, level the humble habitations that have given shelter to the simple dwellers in that glen. What, I ask, is the difference? By what mockery of all justice and truth can we call the one the act of inhuman conquest, the other the legitimate exercise of the sacred rights of property, with which no one is to interfere? Where is the difference to the evicted family? Where is the difference to the mother that leads away her

starving children from the home where her toil had found them bread? What is a 'clearance' such as this but the extermination of military conquest put in force under the forms of law? Let us consider the effect of the evictions on the evicted people. To what were they to turn? The sentence that drives them from the land, to what doom does it consign them? It is the deprivation of the means of life. Enough to say that if in those twenty years all the horrors of a real and actual war of conquest—all the worst horrors of a civil war and insurrection—had swept over Ireland, fewer hearths had been desolated and fewer families been brought to beggary and ruin."

As to the morality of these evictions, some of the English themselves were at last startled into doubt. In the words of Mr. Gladstone (1882):—"Eviction is the exercise of a legal right, which may involve the highest responsibility, nay, even the deepest moral guilt. There may be outrages which—all things considered, the persons and the facts—may be less guilty in the sight of God than evictions."

Landlordism in Ireland, from the beginning down to the present day, has been devoid of the only true sanction—the will of the Irish people, their sense of justice, and the requirements of a free and prosperous national life. The robbery of the land was not only the incentive of the invaders; it

has been also the keystone of their usurped power, and their chief weapon of destruction.

“ A people,” wrote Lalor in 1847, “ whose lands and lives are thus in the keeping and custody of others instead of in their own are not in a position of common safety. The Irish Famine of '46 is example and proof. The corn crops were sufficient to feed the island. But the landlords would have their rents in spite of famine and in defiance of fever. They took the whole harvest and left hunger to those who raised it. Had the people of Ireland been the landlords of Ireland, not a human creature would have died of hunger, nor the failure of the potato been considered a matter of any consequence.”

For many years it was supposed or pretended that the sole source of wealth in Ireland lay in the use of the land for agriculture and pasture. This view could only be taken by those who shut their eyes to the story of the destruction by England of Irish industries and commerce. The wrong done in that respect is recognised now as a matter of history, and is sometimes put forward as the chief cause of the deplorable agrarian conditions which have existed in Ireland. Lord Dufferin, in a pamphlet published in 1867, wrote :—

“From the reign of Queen Elizabeth until within a few years of the Union, the various commercial confraternities of Great Britain never for a moment relaxed their relentless grip on the trades of Ireland. One by one each of our nascent industries was either strangled in its birth or handed over, gagged and bound, to the jealous custody of the rival interest in England, until at last every fountain of wealth was hermetically sealed, and even the traditions of commercial enterprise have perished through desuetude. What has been the consequence of such a system pursued with relentless pertinacity for over 250 years? This: that debarred from every other trade and industry, the entire nation flung itself back on the land with as fatal an impulse as when a river whose current is suddenly impeded rolls back and drowns the valley it once fertilised.”

It is true that the English by their prohibitions and tariffs and navigation laws destroyed the industries and commerce of Ireland,† and thereby impoverished the

†The woollen trade, for example, existed in Ireland from remote antiquity. The Brehon laws deal with all the processes by which wool was weaved into cloth. The people not only provided their own clothing, but carried on a great export trade in textile manufactures. The English forcibly suppressed this staple Irish trade in order to establish their own manufacture, not only in Continental markets but in Ireland. “In reasons of State,” wrote Lord Strafford in 1633, “so long as they (the Irish) did not indrape their own wools, they must of necessity fetch their clothing from us, and consequently in a sort depend upon us for their livelihood, and therefore become so dependent upon this Crown



country, reduced its population, bringing millions of men and women to the alternative of starvation or exile. This added greatly to the misery of the landless population, and by increasing the demand for land aggravated the existing agrarian evils. But as regards the land question, "the great germ of the trouble," as William Rooney said, was "the change of ownership and title, caused by the substitution of a foreign for a native code of land laws—a matter which it did not, of course, suit Lord Dufferin to dwell upon." If the land of Ireland had belonged to the Irish people, the scene depicted by John Mitchel would have been impossible.

"Last year" (1847), he wrote, "we recollect it well, a calm still horror was over the land. Go where you would, in the heart of the town or in the suburb, there was the stillness and the heavy pall-like feel of the chamber of death. You stood in the presence of a dread, silent, vast dissolution. An unseen ruin was creeping round you. You

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as they could not depart from us without nakedness to themselves and children." In 1698 the English Parliament prohibited the export of woollen manufactures from Ireland under the forfeiture of goods and ships, and a penalty of £500 for every such offence. Under the later system of crushing Irish trade by tariffs, England put duties of over £2 a yard on a certain cloth carried from Ireland to England, which paid 5½d. if brought from England to Ireland. For this and other instances see schedule of duties in pamphlet by John Lord Sheffield, published 1785.

saw no war of classes, no open janizary war of foreigners, no human agency of destruction. You could weep, but the rising curse died unspoken within your heart like a profanity. Human passion there was none, but human and unearthly quiet. Children met you, toiling heavily on stone heaps, but their burning eyes were senseless and their faces cramped and weazened like stunted old men. Gangs worked, but without a murmur or a whistle or a laugh, ghostly, like voiceless shadows to the eye. Even womanhood had ceased to be womanly. The birds of the air carolled no more, and the crow and the raven dropped dead upon the wing. Nay, the sky of heaven, the blue mountains, the still lake stretching far away westward, looked not as their wont. Between them and you rose up a steaming agony, a film of suffering, impervious and dim. It seemed as if the *anima mundi*, the soul of the land, was faint and dying, and that the faintness and the death had crept into all things of heaven and earth."

It is common for Englishmen to sweep aside impatiently any reference to the story of rapine and extermination in Ireland as a thing of the past. They close their ears to it as "a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." They have their own reasons for doing so. The Irish have no such faculty for forgetting, and no such motive to attempt it. But we need only look at the last century to

see the Upas tree of landlordism striking its roots in Irish soil and spreading its poisonous branches over the whole country. "Homes," said Michael Davitt, "that ought everywhere to be (what they have conspicuously been in Ireland) the nurseries of moral virtues, were placed at the mercy of a sordid greed, under the laws of eviction; over two hundred thousand of them having, during the lifetime of Queen Victoria, been destroyed or made tenantless for the recovery of civil debts or to clear the inmates off the land to make room for cattle." This was the work of enlightened parliamentary England, after she had generously taken Ireland into her embraces by the Act of Union. The savagery of landlordism, enforced by English magistrates and English soldiers, was justified by English statesmen, and encouraged by English public opinion to work out its horrible culmination in Ireland.

The hæmorrhage by emigration resulting from the disease of landlordism continued. In 1846 the population of Ireland had been over eight millions and a quarter. In 1861 it was 5,788,415. In the years following notwithstanding an increase by births, the population was in 1862, 5,784,527; in 1865, 5,641,086; in 1866, 5,582,625; in 1867,

5,557,196; and with the decline in the total, there was an increase in the excess of females over males, and an absolute increase of insane and decrepit inhabitants. But England, through the medium of the middle nation or landlord garrison, was rescuing Ireland from its slovenly old barbarism. The English Government proclaimed to the world that there was now peace in Ireland, and that the people were prosperous and contented. The Viceroy in 1865, as he made his progress from one cattle-show to another, declared that Ireland was destined to be the "fruitful mother of flocks and herds," and openly avowed that the population must be further thinned out. The distress caused by the Famine had put the tenantry more absolutely than ever at the mercy of the landlords, who rained upon them notices to quit.

Every element in the nation, Catholic, Protestant, and Presbyterian, joined in protest against this cold-blooded campaign, and against the hypocrisy with which the English Government averted its eyes from the misery of Ireland and its cause. The Archbishop of Cashel, in thanking an American Bishop for a donation, spoke of "the hostility of the Government of 'rich and powerful England,' which maintains



a code of land laws ruinous to the best interests of Ireland. . . . The direct operation of the land laws is to root out the Celts." The Rev. Dr. Drew, Grand Chaplain to the Orange Society, writing from Dundrum, Co. Down, in a letter to Mr. Butt on the occasion of a lecture on the land question delivered by him at Limerick, said :—

"I wish my lot had never been cast in rural places. As a clergyman, I hear what neither landlords nor agents ever hear. I see the depression of the people; their sighs and groans are before me. . . . All this came out gradually before me. Nor did I feel as I ought to feel in their behalf until, in my own person and purse, I became the victim of a system of tyranny which cries from earth to heaven for relief. Were I to narrate my own story it would startle many of the Protestants of Ireland. . . . At no little hazard of losing the friendship of some who are high, and good, and kind, I write as I now do."

The National Association, including a large number of the Catholic clergy and some of the more prosperous laity, aimed at obtaining a rectification of the land laws through the English Parliament; while a Presbyterian clergyman, prominent in the agitation for tenant-right, became one of the Executive Council of the "Irish Republic."

The National League, with a Protestant for its president, continued O'Connell's policy of claiming Repeal of the Union and an Irish Parliament. Only the privileged, denationalised class stood sullenly aside, and while sharpening its legal weapon of eviction, again put forward the difference of religion as an excuse for landlord cruelty and injustice, and fanned the smouldering embers of sectarian bigotry as a means for dividing the people and diverting attention from their wrongs. The following letter shews how this class regarded the prospect of religious equality in Ireland and made it an occasion for threatening reprisals with a view to maintaining their ascendancy. It was published in the Dublin *Express*, signed William Traill, and dated "Ballylough, September 14th, 1868":—

"The Roman Catholic leaders of the party are hurrying on that as to which, if they succeed, they will sorely and bitterly lament, at least the poorer class will, whom they pretend to wish well to, but are their greatest enemies. If they are able to effect what I consider an illiberal and wicked object, viz., the disendowment (for that is the word) of the Established Church—equal to which in generosity and indulgence of all sects and denominations no church now exists, ever has existed, or ever will—then I too, and I hope all Protestant landlords will, proclaim 'War to the

knife!' and from and after such conduct to us, that 'we will never give an acre of land to a Roman Catholic.' "

Meanwhile the mass of the people, over whose heads hung the "national notice to quit," had no faith in appeal to the English Parliament. "If it were not known that the bee had a sting, the bee-hive would be robbed," said a peasant orator at a monster meeting on Sleav-na-man. Faith in themselves and their own destiny revived, and they took up the challenge to fight for their lives. They had previously found protection in carrying out the laws of their own secret tribunals. "The Irish Republican Brotherhood," says Dr. Sigerson, "then in its infancy, offered the framework of a secret society, with aims and laws which were professedly made to root the people in the land of their birth." A postage stamp of the Irish Republic printed in New York in 1865 bore an Irish harp with the words *Libertas et natale solum*.

Isaac Butt was counsel for Meagher and John Martin in the State trials of 1848, and he read and explained in court the revolutionary doctrines of Lalor. Those doctrines sank deep into his mind, and while he struggled by persuasion and compromise to win the three F's for the tenants, in his *Plea*



*for the Celtic Race*, he wrote :—"Does anybody really imagine, that, if not by peaceful means, by some desperate struggle, the expatriation of the Irish people will not be stayed?" His agitation against landlord tyranny was the connecting link between Duffy's Tenants' League and the Land League. He saved the land movement from wreck, and loyally handed on to his successors the age-long struggle of the Celtic peasantry for their native soil. In the year of his death, 1879, the Land League was started as a national organisation.

The indomitable attachment of the Irish people to the soil of their country remained, and strength was returning to defend it, on the broad and popular basis laid by the Fenian organisation. The Land League, working by open agitation with the spirit and aim of revolution, attacked the main social injustice which rested on English rule, and gave fresh strength and momentum to the movement for self-government started by Isaac Butt under the name of Home Rule. Under the aggressive leadership of Parnell, a new phase began, in which the land agitation of Michael Davitt, based on the teaching of Lalor rather than on the programme of the Tenants' League or the three F's of Mr. Butt, was linked to the fight for



self-government. "On the land question," Lalor had said, "we must take our stand, fling out our banner, and hurl down to England our gage of battle. Victory follows that banner alone, that and no other." Reasserted by Michael Davitt, this idea animated the Land League, and kindled once more into flame the national aspiration for freedom. In 1881 the League had become, in the words of the English Tory Leader, "the *de facto* government of Ireland." Religious differences ceased to divide the people when the land question was raised. North and South could no longer be kept asunder. "When Davitt came North," says Mr. Good, "in 1880, as the apostle of the 'New Departure,' his meeting at Armagh was presided over by the Worshipful Master of an Orange Lodge. Parnell's whirlwind campaign in the Ulster constituencies owed its success to the support of Protestant farmers."

The story of the Land League is too well known, and too well remembered by many now living, to be dealt with here, except to emphasise that it shewed the Irish people that the best method of emancipation was by taking their vital affairs into their own hands. What England dreaded was the determination of the Irish to direct their

own lives in their own way in their own country—not the attempts to oust her rule by armed force or parliamentary persuasion. In Mr. Gladstone's words (1882):—  
 “With a political revolution we have ample strength to cope. There is no reason why our cheeks should grow pale or why our hearts should sink at the idea of grappling with a political revolution. . . . . But a social revolution is a very different matter. . . . . The seat and source of the movement was not to be found during the time the Government was in power. It is to be looked for in the foundation of the Land League.”  
 In the same year the London *Times* wrote:

“The Irishman has played his cards well, and is making a golden harvest. He has beaten a legion of landlords, dowagers, and encumbrancers of all sorts out of the field, driving them into workhouses. He has baffled the greatest of legislatures and outflanked the largest of British armies in getting what he thinks his due. Had all this wonderful advance been made at the cost of some other country, England would have been the first to offer chaplets, testimonials, and ovations to the band of patriots who had achieved it. As the sufferers, in a material sense, are chiefly of English extraction, we cannot help a little soreness. Yet, reason compels us to admit that the Irish have dared and done as they never did before.”

Had this policy been adopted before the Famine, Ireland might have been spared the loss of her population and years of misery and foiled efforts. Had this course been steadily pursued since 1880, the next thirty years would not have passed with such barren results so far as Irish freedom is concerned. A turning point in the struggle had been reached. England for the first time had sent up signals of distress. The Land League was on the road to destroy landlordism and stultify and undermine the rule of Dublin Castle. The Kilmainham Treaty, the "slowing down" of the work of the League, and the concentration on parliamentary action at Westminster, were the first steps down the slope which led to the demoralisation of the national forces. The pass was sold in 1882, with nothing to show for it except an Arrears Act, which graciously remitted payment of accumulations of blackmail which the Land League had made it impossible for the landlords to recover. It is true that the English Parliament, under pressure of agitation in Ireland, took up the question of land tenure. Land Acts and Purchase Acts were passed, the Irish representatives taking part in such legislation, moved by the need of providing in any way for the relief of the people. But

the penalty was paid for this acknowledgment by the Irish Party of the claim by the English Parliament to deal with the rights in the Irish soil. The policy of parliamentary compromise ended in impotence. Co-operation in reform became connivance in wrong. Ireland became an English domestic question.

To a large extent Irish history has been the story of the people's struggle against the blighting wrong of landlordism. Their strength to resist conquest, and the success which they had in maintaining their freedom against organised force, came largely from their tradition of a free and just land system, and their undying attachment to their ancient rights in the soil. The recovery of national rights must be completed and secured by the restoration of the land to the people.



### III.

## The Nation's Birthright

THE Land Purchase Act of 1903 is sometimes spoken of as a generous act of reparation by the English, showing a change of heart on their part towards Ireland; as a complete cure of their former misrule; and as the final solution of the Irish land question. The generosity of the English consisted in helping their garrison to make a strategic retreat, with their pockets full of plunder, from a position in enemy territory which had become too hot for them. The landlords were losing ground in their campaign against the Irish people. Rack-renting and robbery of tenants' improvements under the screw of eviction had been abated by the Irish themselves. The relief which had come was won by the people's own action in Ireland, not by parliamentary palaver at Westminster. Mr. Gladstone said in the English House of Commons :—  
“Suppose I am told that without the agitation Ireland would never have had the Land Act of 1881, are you prepared to deny that ?

I hear no challenge upon that statement, for I think it is generally and deeply felt that without the agitation the Land Act would not have passed. As the man responsible more than any other for the Act of 1881, I must record my firm opinion that it would not have become the law of the land if it had not been for the agitation with which Irish society was convulsed."

The best days of the landlord were over—the days when he could extort so-called rent from tenants for their patches made fertile only by their own industry, and for their homes built by their own hands; when he could drive them to gather sea-weed on the rocks of the Atlantic, and pursue them even there for rent. The landlord, therefore, was ready to release his grip—at any rate of the holdings which apart from the tenants' own industry and improvements had practically no value, and therefore could yield no proper rent. The real position was thus indicated by Sir James Caird in a letter to the *London Times* on the 20th March, 1886 :—" If the present prices of agricultural production continue, I should fear that from the land held by the large body of poor farmers in Ireland any economical rent has for the present disappeared." The *Times* referring to Sir James Caird's letter said :—" His

extensive knowledge and long experience are sufficient warranty for the substantial accuracy of his figures, even were they not borne out by the facts unhappily too patent to all the world. . . . Thus one-third of the total rental is worthless *ab initio*, and the other two-thirds are obviously liable, apart from all political difficulties, to indefinite depreciation."

The landlord, therefore, was ready to release his grip, but at a price to be charged to the tenants, and with a bribe of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. to be charged to the taxpayers. Both price and bribe were to be secured on the public funds. The landlord was to be relieved from the expense and shame of extorting rents to which he never had a moral title, and which in many cases had become irrecoverable. His title was to be whitewashed afresh—the blackmailer was to blossom into the British fundholder. He was the more ready to avail himself of this opportunity, as England's hold on Ireland shewed signs of relaxing. The writing had appeared on the wall, and the day of Irish freedom was approaching. The landlords in the English Parliament were ready to lend a helping hand to their fellows in distress—all the more so, from the consciousness that the downfall of the

rent tyranny in Ireland would be an encouragement and object-lesson to the millions of sufferers from land monopoly in England itself.

Just as the loans raised for expenditure on the Irish famine were charged by England on the Irish taxes for repayment; just as in 1898, when County Councils were established in Ireland, the landlords claimed their *quid pro quo*, and the English Parliament awarded them an annual grant of £727,655 out of the taxes as relief from rates on their land; so in 1903 the landlords, with Irish self-government looming ahead, bargained with the English Parliament for their price. The Purchase Act of 1903 was no act of reparation to Ireland. It embodied no principle of justice, no recognition of Irish national rights. It was a recognition by the landlords that their old game was up, and that a new one must be played. The landlords would unload their depreciated stock—their rotten parchment titles—upon tenants and taxpayers. Everything was to be done decorously, and according to parliamentary form. Sufficient dust was to be raised at Westminster to obscure the transaction in the eyes of the Irish Party, which had become fixed on the green benches of the English House of Commons



instead of on the green fields of their native land.

Just as in 1882 nothing was gained by the "slowing down" of the Land League agitation and the concentration at Westminster, so in 1903 the parliamentary efforts of the Party ended in the shadow and not the substance of success. Like the dog in the fable, fascinated by the mere reflection of Irish victory, an English Act of Parliament, they dropped into the water the real national asset, the power of the Irish nation by its own action to secure justice and national right. The landlords conceded nothing of any substance. They retired, if not with the honours of war, with the swag of the financial trickster. The Irish parliamentarians, by their connivance in this "deal," became domesticated in the English House of Commons. The Irish people was for the moment thrown off the straight road leading to national freedom, social justice, and industrial prosperity. In later days the purchase juggle has served as an excuse for shirking any efforts towards a just solution of the land question, and as a pretext for still dallying at Westminster. Mr. John Dillon went so far as to threaten the Irish people that, if they did not send him to the English House of Commons, the purchasing

tenants would have taxes put upon their land, and their farms would be taken from them and given to discharged soldiers. But the farmers whom Mr. Dillon thus threatened with penal taxation and ejectment, will remember that his presence at Westminster did not prevent the tax on farmers' earnings under Schedule B. of the Income Tax being increased six-fold in three years, to pay for England's war for the freeing of small nationalities; and the landless Irish will not forget that his presence there has done nothing to open up the ranches or the uncultivated domains of the great landlords, or to save the town population from being herded in slums and cellars.

The Act of 1903 was in no way generous to the Irish people. Prices under the Ashbourne and other Acts had averaged fifteen years' purchase; under the 1903 Act similar land was sold at seven or eight years' purchase more, and not on the value of the land, but according to a scale based on the rent, which put a heavier burden on the impoverished tenant than on the prosperous, and gave the greatest reward to the landlord whose exactions had been the most unjust. The eagerness of tenants to free themselves from the landlords led to an enormous in-

flation of prices; but even so the worst landlords clung to their exorbitant rents and refused to sell, so that the Act failed to work where the need for relief was greatest. In addition to the inflated capitalised value of their rents, a bonus of eighteen million pounds was awarded to the landlord class, and nothing to their victims. The Purchase Acts released no fresh land for use: while exacting an exorbitant ransom from the tenants remaining in occupation, they left the evicted families and all the rest of the people, who had so loyally supported the tenants in their struggle, without any rights in the land. The policy of England remained unchanged—to keep Ireland as a beef farm and as a reservoir of cheap labour in the interests of the English consumer and employer.

The Act of 1903 was no complete or final cure, but only a partial palliation of the evils of landlordism. The only complete and final cure can be found in the restitution of the land to the people of Ireland. The land of Ireland is the natural endowment of the people of Ireland, from generation to generation. The question which the people of Ireland must put to their representatives is Lalor's question:—"This principle, then—that the property and

possession of the land, as well as the powers of legislation, belong of right to the people who live in the land and under the law—do you assent to it, in its full integrity, and to the present and pressing necessity of enforcing it?" The declaration which the Irish people are entitled to expect from their representatives is Lalor's declaration:—"That the entire ownership of Ireland, moral and material, up to the sun and down to the centre, is vested of right in the people of Ireland."

"I hold and maintain," wrote Lalor in the *Irish Felon*, "that the entire soil of a country belongs of right to the entire people of that country, and is the rightful property not of any one class, but of the nation at large, in full and effective possession to let to whom they will, on whatever tenure, terms, rents, services and conditions they will, one condition being, however, unavoidable and essential, the condition that the tenant shall bear full, true, and undivided fealty and allegiance to the nation, and the laws of the nation, whose lands he holds, and owes no allegiance whatsoever to any other prince, power, or people, or any obligation of obedience or respect to their will, orders, or laws. I hold further, and firmly believe, that the enjoyment by the people of this right of first ownership in the soil is essential to the vigor and vitality of all other rights; to their vitality, efficiency, and value; to their secure



possession and safe exercise. For let no people deceive themselves or be deceived by the words and colours and phrases and forms of a mock freedom, by constitutions and charters and articles and franchises. These things are paper and parchment, waste and worthless. Let laws and institutions say what they will, this fact will be stronger than all laws, and prevail against them—the fact that those who own your lands will make your laws and command your liberties and your lives.”

By re-asserting their right to their own country, the Irish people would lay the foundation on which to rebuild a free, prosperous and united nation. Speaking of Lalor, James Connolly said :—“ In his writings, as we study them to-day, we find principles of action and of society which have within them, not only the best plan of campaign for a country seeking its freedom through insurrection against a dominant nation, but also the seeds of the more perfect social peace of the future.” Those principles embody the eternal truth which has lived deep in the consciousness of the Irish people, and has been voiced again and again by their leaders. Thus Parnell, addressing a meeting at Navan on 4th May, 1880, said :

“ We went down to Mayo and we preached the eternal truth—the truth which one day or other will be recognised throughout the length and

breadth of Ireland, England, and Scotland—that the land of a country, the air of a country, the water of a country, belongs to no man. They were not made by any man, and they belong to all the human race. We believe that fixity of tenure means fixity of landlordism, fixity of degradation; and that if the people of Ireland really desire to settle the land question, that they must strike at the root of the evil—the system of landlordism under which the land of Ireland was first confiscated and robbed from its original holders.”

Landlordism is an alien system. The Irish people must throw it off, if they would re-establish their social life on its traditional and congenial basis. The previous chapters have sketched the origin and working of landlordism, and the Irish land system which it displaced. We have now to consider the problem of restoring in a form adapted to modern conditions, the ancient national idea and practice, under which, subject to the rights of the community, every family was ensured exclusive possession of its holding with security of tenure and full enjoyment of the product of its work and expenditure, in accordance with laws expressing the free will of the nation and put in practice by the people themselves.

Such a polity not only would conform

with the traditions and character of the Irish race, but is the necessary framework of the modern co-operative commonwealth towards which social reformers are striving to-day. It is also in accordance with the teachings of the Church. In an address to the Conference of the Catholic Truth Society in Ireland in October, 1919, the Very Rev. P. J. Flood, D.D., said :—" In Britain men speak and think in terms of wages. The family is the unit of which the commonwealth is the sum, and when the full organic forces of society were allowed free rein, the normal unit—of which all others were but copies and analogies—was the human family. The word 'commonwealth,' used as an equivalent for the term 'State,' emphasises the aim and object of the civil community—namely, the common well-being of all the members. . . . A co-operative commonwealth can best be realised when the institution of property attaches to a determining number of householders composing the community." The Rev. L. McKenna, S.J., said that " a State in which private property is widely distributed, and a determining feature of the organisation, had never been given a chance. It had certainly never been given a chance in Ireland, because another

nation came and took the property of millions of Irishmen from them. The feudal system gave extravagant rights to the few over the many, and enabled the few to rob the many at their leisure." The Rev. E. O'Reilly suggested that among the solutions of the difficulties referred to would be the division of ranches and giving more people land.

In the disposition of the national birth-right, the representatives of the whole nation must of course be paramount, and must exercise a general supervision, with authority to adjust the requirements of the several districts. But there should be the minimum of bureaucratic control, and the fullest play for the inhabitants of each district to determine and safeguard their own mutual rights and obligations according to their knowledge of local conditions and their own sense of fairness. Father McKenna warned the Catholic Truth Conference that "any system of socialism would give rise to an oligarchy—to an organisation in which a few men would have the power and will to trample on the vast majority of their fellows." The function of the public authorities, both national and local, should be confined to securing to all, on terms fair to the rest of the community, the opportunities for livelihood



provided by nature, without dictating the way in which they should make use of those opportunities. Subject to the rights of others, every one should be master of his own activity, and the sole owner of his property. What justice requires is the restoration of the right of each family to live on, and draw its livelihood from, its fair share of land on fair terms, namely, such share and such terms as are consistent with the rights of others.

It is reasonable to suppose that on the resumption by the Irish of the control of Irish land, any claim of the English Government for further payment in respect of the right to possess Irish land will be withdrawn. The title to lands vested in the Congested Districts Board, and the mining rights reserved by the Land Commissioners on purchases under the Purchase Acts, and any other rights of Boards or Commissions in Irish lands, can only be regarded as held in trust for the Irish people. All such titles, and the right to any payment by individuals for the land they hold will revert by right to the Irish Government, and any such payment should be made, in Lalor's words, "to themselves, the people, for public purposes, and for behoof and benefit of them, the entire general people."

The Irish have already paid large sums under the Purchase Acts on account of the capitalised value of future rents of Irish land, and an immense sum in respect of money overpaid in taxation would fall to be refunded by England to Ireland in any just settlement of accounts between the two countries. In these circumstances, England could not justly claim to receive any outstanding balance of the purchase-annuities, and should shoulder any remaining obligations to its own bondholders. There would then be no one standing between the Irish nation and the occupiers of its soil.

When the right to receive the purchase-annuities passes to the Irish nation, it will no doubt be remembered that the obligations which were undertaken by the tenant-purchasers in order to gain secure possession of their farms were imposed on them by duress. Their position has been made worse by the burden of rates, which was shuffled on to them by the landowners, and by the taxes, the amount of which has been multiplied many times since they entered into the purchase agreements. Owing to a rise in the value of land, their position may in some cases have improved as compared with that of the unbought tenants, but they will be entitled to favourable consideration with a view

to relief from any of the existing burdens upon them which may be found to be excessive. They should have full opportunity, if they so desire, to take advantage of a juster system, and to share in the benefits which it would bring to all in common. But in any case there can never be any question of disturbing the secure possession won by the purchasing tenants, or of imposing any increased burden upon them.

But there are still tenants in all the thirty-two counties without any security of possession, paying rents, often excessive, to landlords who have done nothing to give the land its value. There are other intolerable results of the exercise by landowners of the arbitrary powers given to them by alien law. There is the unnatural spectacle of the congested areas in the West, and wide tracts of homeless, uncultivated lands in the North, South, East and Midlands of Ireland. There are hundreds of thousands of landless men in Ireland, whose claim to a share in the national birthright cannot be ignored. There are the thousands of evicted families, for whom the Purchase Acts made no provision. There are the holders of "uneconomic" farms; there are the farmers' sons; and the agricultural labourers, who under the absurd restriction

in the Labourers' Act, 1906, are prevented from acquiring untenanted land. The English Government may care nothing for these men and their families; but there can be no just settlement of the land question which does not recognise their rights. Until provision is made for them, the excessive flight of Irish workers to foreign towns and factories cannot be checked.

The necessity for providing for the younger generation now growing up is urgent. During the war there has been a stoppage of emigration, and the number of young people in Ireland is greater now than it has been for years. For their own sake, and to maintain the strength of the nation, room must be found for them in Ireland. The flow of emigration must not set in again. There must be more homes in Ireland and better means of livelihood, making marriage and the rearing of children possible under healthier, happier conditions. It is intolerable that labourers should not have a chance of getting land from which to provide themselves with milk and vegetables; that while the fertile lands of Meath and Westmeath, of Kildare and King's County lie waste, men and women should be labouring from dawn till late at night to win a



bare sustenance from the rocks of Donegal, and that families in Mayo should be unable to exist without sending their daughters from fifteen years old to Scotland for six months in every year to work on their knees all day in the potato fields and to sleep in barns.

In the towns, professional and business men and retail traders struggle under the burden of ground rents which arise from their own activities, and heavy rates which penalise every fresh development. Working-men compete against one another for employment, and are herded with their families in unspeakable slums, which the public authorities cannot clear without paying blackmail to the landlords at an average rate of over £6,000 an acre, while vacant building sites are held up for prohibitive prices which rise as the need for accommodation becomes more urgent. Overcrowding and high rents; low wages and unemployment; hungry men and women, and barefoot, naked children—such is the common story in Ireland. But this cannot be attributed to the nature either of the people or of the country. “For this island,” said an old writer, “it is endowed with so many dowries of nature, consider-

ing the fruitfulness of the soil, the ports, the rivers, the fishings, and especially the race and generation of men, valiant, hard, and active, as it is not easy, no! not upon the Continent, to find such a confluence of commodities."

Overcrowding in slums and hovels, shortage of food, scarcity of raw material, want of employment, in a country like Ireland is not an inevitable tragedy: it is a criminal wrong. Irish manufacture and overseas trade was strangled by England. While the English retain control of Irish trade with foreign countries, they make a double profit at the expense of the Irish, by buying and selling for them abroad. The new Ireland will establish direct commercial relations with the Continent and America. But it will be much easier to revive foreign trade if industry is free from shackles at home, and the natural resources of the nation are readily available for development. In their own country the Irish people have been held bound by land monopoly, which hampers production at its source, and checks the healthy circulation of wealth through the arteries of trade. Until that fundamental wrong is remedied, general prosperity, shared among the

people in the old Irish way, cannot be achieved. Sufficient food and houses, an adequate supply of raw material, abundant employment, a fair return for labour, are only possible if access to land, and the stores which it yields to labour, is made easy for all on fair terms—land for houses, shops and factories; for farms and small holdings; for growing timber; for mining and quarrying; and generally for the production of raw material for Irish industries.\*

Forty-eight millions' worth of manufactured goods are now imported into Ireland in a year. A large part of these could be produced more economically in Ireland, if the land were utilised so that raw material came forward cheaply and abundantly, and if suitable sites for works

\*Ireland possesses valuable deposits of building materials, granite, marble, limestone, sandstone, slate, flagstone, brick and pottery clays. At Skerries, Co. Dublin, there are materials for the manufacture of cement on a large scale. An English firm has recently made enquiries as to the suitability of Cork materials for the manufacture of Portland cement, and as to the possibility of getting sites on the harbour. On the shores of Lough Neagh, there are deposits of sand suitable for glass-making. There are copper deposits in the Vale of Avoca, and at Allihies, Co. Cork; lead in Counties Wicklow, Sligo, Clare, and Monaghan. Among other minerals now being worked or prospected for are antimony, lignite, felspar, gypsum, zinc, silica, soapstone, barytes, kieselguhr, ochre.

and a supply of power could be obtained with less difficulty and expense. Ireland has facilities for producing, both for home consumption and export, such articles as boots and shoes, saddlery, trunks, gloves, woollen goods, hardware, condensed milk, sugar, soap, brushes, brooms, glass, furniture, and other household requirements. Many articles requiring the importation of metal and other material, such as machinery, agricultural implements, ranges, stoves, ovens, lorries, bolts, nails and screws, paper, rope and cordage, are already being, or might be, manufactured in Ireland. A large export trade might be done in cured fish and dressed meat and their by-products, as well as in those of peat. The linen, cotton and woollen manufactures might be increased. All such developments would be assisted if factories could be more easily established and if, instead of being concentrated in a few areas they were dispersed throughout the country, incidentally improving the status and wages of workers in the rural districts.

For such development, Ireland has at hand three great natural, national resources, which should be exploited, not for the profit of monopolists, but for the common benefit: the extensive coal de-



posits,† the bogs containing material capable of yielding 5,000 million tons of dried peat,‡ and the water-power of her 237 rivers and 180 lakes. It is estimated that the rivers Shannon, Corrib, Erne and Bann could produce in the aggregate 100,000 horse-power, equivalent to a saving of 700,000 tons of coal per annum. The huge Lough Corrib system might be utilised to work the granite and serpentine in the neighbourhood of Galway. In Donegal, where the rivers rise near the coast, it is said that 12,000 horse-power is available. The river Bann system would be useful in the extraction of aluminium from bauxite. Many of the high-level lakes could produce over 1,000 horse-power annually. From all the Irish rivers and lakes together a total

†The Leinster coalfield (anthracite) is estimated to contain over 150 million tons of workable coal, and the Lough Allen coalfield (bituminous) about eight million tons. The Slieveardagh Collieries in Tipperary (anthracite) have an output of about 4,000 tons a year. There are unworked coalfields around and under Lough Neagh, and near Larne and Portrush. Mr. Lyburn, F.G.S., estimates that in the Tyrone coalfields there are 97,100,000 tons, and at Ballycastle 13,700,000 tons.

‡According to the report of a Committee of Experts, communicated by the Cork City Engineer, the bogs of Ireland, with an area of three million acres, are estimated to contain the equivalent of three thousand million tons of coal, and an effort should be made to determine if these three million acres are available for agriculture and the coal equivalent available as fuel.

of 250,000 horse-power might be economically developed, to raise which power by steam would require over one and three-quarter million tons of coal per annum. An authoritative American writer has fixed 3,500,000 horse-power as the total water power available in Ireland.

All these resources should be utilised to provide cheap power for industries. But before progress can be made, "vested interests" have to be "propitiated," and some unified control in the public interest is indispensable. § With such control and direction, the various sources of water-power could be linked in large stations for centralised industries, and the energy could also be re-distributed to provide light, heat, and power for neighbouring towns and villages. For the dispersion of industries throughout the country, the cheapest and most effective method would be the genera-

§In an article on the "Water Power Resources of Ireland" in *Engineering*, Sir J. P. Griffith, M.A., says:—"There are a great number of sources of power on the principal rivers, but in all such problems there is a conflict of interests to be met, such as navigation, drainage, fishing and existing milling rights. There is little hope of dealing thoroughly and economically with such problems unless they can be co-ordinated under some unified control, which can deal with them upon broad lines of national utility. With the advance made in electrical transmission, I look forward hopefully to a linking up of the scattered water resources in Ireland into a useful service to supplement our fuel resources."

tion of electrical energy, which could be transmitted over wide areas. The supply of such power would also enable the means of communication and transport by rail and road to be cheapened and extended.

But for all these efforts to achieve their purpose, the natural resources must be readily available on fair terms. The terms must be such as to allow the products and facilities to be supplied to the public at the lowest price consistent with the payment of good wages to the workers, and of the proper expenses of management and return to capital, whether the undertaking be in public or private hands. Any surplus value arising from the exploitation of these national resources should be reserved for the public, either directly where the undertaking is publicly owned and managed, or in the form of a rent or tax in respect of public utilities entrusted to private exploitation. And in order to allow the benefits to be enjoyed by those for whom they are intended, the increased value of land in the districts affected by the developments must be secured for the people in common, and must not be filched away by monopolist landowners. The above considerations apply also to the provision of public needs and amenities, such as schools,

libraries, baths, public parks and recreation grounds. If these are to be supplied to meet the need, land must be procurable where it is required without payment of blackmail; and if the full benefit of the public expenditure is to be secured, the increased value of adjoining land must accrue to the public, and must not be diverted into the pockets of landlords in the shape of multiplied rents.

Hitherto all such developments of the general well-being, as well as the cultivation of the soil on which the livelihood of the bulk of the people has depended, have been hindered and penalised by land monopoly, with its restrictions and its tolls. "Certain persons," says Tolstoy in a striking parable, "have driven a herd of cows, on whose milk they live, into an enclosure. The cows have eaten and trampled the forage, they have chewed each others' tails, and they low and moan, seeking to get out. But the very men who live on the milk of these cows have set around the enclosure plantations of mint, they have cultivated flowers, laid out a park and lawn-tennis ground, and they do not let out the cows lest they should spoil these arrangements. The cows cease to yield milk, and they invent various methods for improving the conditions of the cows. They



build sheds over them, they gild their horns, they alter the hour of milking, and concern themselves with the treatment of old and invalid cows . . . . but they will not do the one thing needful, which is to remove the barrier, and let the cows have access to the pasture.”

Just as England professed to be ready to do anything for Ireland except let her go free, so the ascendancy party, which is in Ireland for what they can get out of it, will do anything for the people except get off their backs. Sir Edward Carson told his dupes in Belfast after the poll on 14th December, 1918 :—“ Capital must be generous and Labour hard-working. There was no other way to do it.” There is another way to do it. The wall of land monopoly has barred the forward march of the people to prosperity. While that wall stands, Labour cannot be blamed if there is a state of unrest. While that wall stands, efforts on philanthropic or co-operative lines, or by municipal or State action, for the improvement of conditions in town or country, break themselves to pieces against it. That wall must be overthrown, if the people are to enter into their rightful inheritance.

As to the end to be achieved, there can be

no doubt. As to the means, the people must decide for themselves what measures will be practicable, just, and necessary. Democratic thought in other countries, faced by corresponding evils and inspired by corresponding ideals, has turned towards a solution, which would secure to all their just rights in the common heritage, and would at the same time ensure the freedom of individuals and preserve the rights of property, while eliminating economic privilege and thereby destroying the absolutism of capital. It looks to a readjustment of taxation, which will undermine the wall of land monopoly until it sinks quietly and disappears. This is the modern, practical, and equitable application of Lalor's principles.

This policy has been put into successful operation in Australia and New Zealand, in the Argentine Republic and the United States of Brazil and in other parts of South America, and is rapidly gaining support in European countries, such as Denmark,||

||In Denmark friends of land reform have influenced public opinion to the extent that an Experimental Valuation has been made of the value of the land. The result is now to hand. Denmark's land values are assessed at 3,684 million kroner (100 kroner amounts to £6 7s. 4d.), but to this sum has to be added the capital land value of a few properties still to be valued. These will make the complete land values of Denmark

which depend chiefly on agriculture, as well as in those which are mainly manufacturing. It aims not at the nationalisation of the land as understood by Socialism, which involves the ownership and working of farms and factories by the State. It aims only at the recovery of the public value, or a part thereof, which the land itself has, apart from work or expenditure on it. Occupiers would have secure and exclusive possession of their holdings, with full control of their work and full ownership of their property. There would be a change of taxation, which would relieve them from the rates and taxes which now fall on them, while the receivers of rent, and the monopolisers of untenanted lands, and the owners of land in towns and cities and of valuable private monopolies, would be called on to

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come very close to the sum of 4,000 million kroner, about one-half of the combined values of land and improvement, and about 1,500 kroner (£95 10s. 0d.) per head of the population. Copenhagen, which includes one-fifth of Denmark's population, contains also one-fifth of the land values; two-thirds of land value attaches to all the country districts, about equally divided between the islands and Jutland. A land value tax of 3 per cent. for the whole country would yield about 120 million kroner, a sum which, presumably, in normal years, exceeds the whole of Denmark's revenue requirements. In the words of Kr. Pederson, the Danish Minister of Agriculture:—

“Land values must be transferred into the communal chest, and everybody ought to have access to land. The reform will be carried through, when the electors choose to.”

contribute according to the value of their privileges. Tenants who have purchased their farms would not contribute, unless, finding that it would be to their interest to do so, they elected to pay an appropriate share in lieu of their purchase annuities and present rates and taxes. But if they so wished, they should be entitled to take advantage of the new system, and so free themselves from the obligations which they were forced to undertake in order to secure their rights in the soil.

The fund arising in this way would be allocated to the upkeep of public services, including education, main roads, etc. When the country ceases to be saddled with an army of occupation stated by the English War Secretary to number 55,000 men and to cost £210,000 a week, and with an enormous body of police with no police duties to perform, whose salaries and pensions are being increased, according to the English Chief Secretary, because they are really a military force, there will be enough money to provide proper salaries for teachers who are now paid worse than labourers and are being driven in desperation to the verge of a strike. The public fund would be employed in ways which would be remunera-



tive to the nation, and the provision of roads and public conveniences of all kinds would increase the value of the land from which the fund arises. The surplus of the fund would be available for purposes of national development, financing agricultural credit banks and co-operative societies, technical education and research, and land-drainage and re-afforestation.

The editor of *Nationality* has said that a tax on land values would be a fair tax, and would have good effects in releasing the ranches. It is possible to develop both these points a little. First, as to the fairness of the tax. What is meant exactly by land value, and by the taxation of land values? Land value is what any piece of land itself is worth, as distinct from any buildings, structures, works of improvement, or crops on it. Taxing land values means that this value or a part of it would be received as revenue by the community, instead of going into a parasitic landlord's pocket as rent, or being enjoyed as a monopoly profit by an anti-social ranch-owner, or being kept unrealised by a dog-in-the-manger who withholds the land from use altogether. This would be just, because the land was not made by the landowner, nor does its value come from anything done or spent by

him. The land with all its natural advantages comes from the Creator and Universal Father, as a free bounty to all His children. Its value depends on the varying degrees of its natural advantages, and on the number and energy of the population desiring to use it; and that value is further increased by the expenditure of public money on improvements and conveniences, and by the grant of special monopoly privileges in connection with certain sites, as for railways and licensed premises.

The taxation of land values would, therefore, secure for the public benefit what is really and rightfully a public fund. It would put no fresh burden on any one, except those who are exacting a tribute or private tax from the workers, for which they render nothing in return, and those who are sterilising the gifts of nature, denying their fellow-countrymen the right to satisfy their wants in the ways which Providence has ordained. A later chapter will examine in detail the relief from rents and purchase annuities, from rates and taxes, which would come to working farmers and town tenants. But certain general results may be mentioned here. By making town sites, and rich lands now kept for grazing and private pleasure grounds and

preserves, and monopolies in private hands, contribute according to their real value, the taxation of land values would tap fresh revenue, and so lighten the burden which now falls unjustly and unnecessarily on the working population in town and country. The deadhead would be properly called to account, and corresponding relief would come to all who are fairly earning their livelihood and playing their part by working with hand or brain and employing their capital in the production of wealth. No one would be hampered in his work or deprived of the enjoyment of its full product.

Secondly, as to the effects of the tax in releasing land for use. Land kept out of cultivation would be taxed on what it would be worth if put to suitable use. Owners would not long be willing to pay the tax without any means of recoupment: they would have to use the land properly themselves or part with it to others who would do so. The working of the present system has an exactly opposite effect. As things now are, the richest grass lands pay the lightest rates and taxes. In a parish in Meath, for example, the chief burden of rates and taxes is borne by the working farmers and the struggling people who occupy the poorest

lands in the parish. The burden is lightest on the fat lands—the richest in Ireland—which are houseless and untilled. This immunity encourages the owners to keep this good land in such a state that its value remains unrealised. It might be practically non-existent for any good that it is to the community. But now suppose this land were taxed and rated on its real value to the community—what it would be worth if divided into small farms equipped with suitable buildings. In the first place, this would be only fair—that the heaviest charge should fall on the best land instead of on the worst, and that the industrious community should be relieved of the excessive burden now thrown on them. Secondly, the effect would be to force those lands into proper use. Their value would be realised for the good of the community and a fresh source of livelihood would be thrown open to a large number of now landless families.\*\*

\*\*Some indication of the possibilities in this direction is given by the statement made that during 1916—18 under war pressure the crop area in Ireland increased by 903,340 acres (the area under wheat by 80,888 acres). This of course meant more employment and consequently higher wages. Such results may have been due partly to the arbitrary orders to cultivate, made under war regulations, and partly to the artificially stimulated demand for wheat and other products. Those causes will pass away; they should



The same considerations apply to town sites. More land would become available, and on easier terms; while the building and improvement of houses and business premises would no longer be penalised by an increased charge, as under the present system of rates and taxes. Generally speaking, the tax, being levied on the value of land whether it was being used or not, would make it unprofitable to hold up land which was wanted for building or agriculture or any other purpose. It would deprive the speculator of his present inducement and power to "hold for the rise," or in other words to suck increased gain out of the growing needs of the people. It would counteract the selfishness of the landowner who keeps the families which might use "his" land out of homes and livelihood, and by restricting the available supply of land raises rents everywhere and diminishes the earnings of all workers. As more land became available, rents would tend to fall to a fair level, and as the tax absorbed a larger part of the rent, the merely parasitic landowner would tend to disappear

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be replaced by the juster and more effective method of taxing land values, which would supply a uniform pressure on all those who control land to use it or allow it to be used in the most suitable and profitable way.

and leave the tenant in undivided possession. As all the opportunities which nature has provided for production were made available, fresh avenues of employment would be opened up, and wages would rise. Labour at last would be able to reap the fruits of its exertions in full, free from the exploitation which it cannot escape under land monopoly.

The method which we have been considering has the merit of being simple and conservative. Its main feature is a change in the incidence of taxation, which could be effected by easy stages. It would not dislocate society, but would strengthen family ties by making marriage and the bringing up of children possible under happier conditions. It would not be a revolution, but an evolution in which the wrongs which cause discontent would tend gradually to disappear. It would not destroy the existing mechanism of trade, but only remove the sand which clogs its wheels. It also has the merit of being certain and universal in operation. It is the key to both urban and rural problems, and would base national economy on rock bottom. Those who sowed would also reap. The rights of the community would be reconciled with the utmost latitude of individual freedom.

Such an economic constitution would provide a settled basis for the development of a free, progressive State. It would keep society in permanent health, and would prevent the old evils from reappearing as development takes place. Without it, the increasing wealth coming with a free Ireland would go, as it does in England and elsewhere, the lion's share to the few, and a bare subsistence to the many. Where land monopoly is maintained, material progress is accompanied by want and discontent, and the wealth of the privileged classes grows in glaring contrast to the poverty of the disinherited masses.

But while in normal conditions the natural working of a just economic system would suffice as a healthy regimen, in the abnormal state to which Ireland has been reduced by alien laws special interim methods may be necessary. It would be intolerable that the flow of emigration should begin again, while the ranches still lie untenanted. The evicted families must have homes again, and the case of the congested districts is hardly less urgent. Given economic facilities, the people would tend naturally to settle themselves on suitable lands and establish their own homes and social life. But after centuries of whole-

sale hunting of the people out of their natural homes, assisted schemes on a considerable scale may be desirable for settling families and groups on the untenanted lands. This may be done by help in forming and financing co-operative societies of various kinds,†† or in other ways which the people may adopt for enabling the local community, including labourers, to have the joint benefit of combined purchase of seeds, manure and farming machinery, and marketing of produce. If all stand together in a common policy to promote and safeguard their own and one another's rights and interests, the people's good sense, neighbourly kindness, and love of fairness will find ways to secure suitable tenures and means of livelihood for all.

Special assistance may also be necessary to revive Irish industry and commerce from the state to which the paralysing clutch of

††Land might be acquired by such societies (a) for sub-division among individual occupiers, (b) partly for such sub-division and partly for retention as common land for grazing or some other communal purpose, (c) for utilisation by the members as a co-operative farm, the whole being tilled and grazed in common. Such societies could also with advantage establish their own co-operative stores in the villages for supplying the members with tea, sugar, and other household necessities; and with land and surplus funds at their disposal, they could provide village halls, places of recreation and refreshment, and simple hotels for travellers and visitors.



England has reduced them. As the drain of Irish wealth to England ceases, and opportunities occur for utilising Irish savings at home, means will be found for organising fresh Irish enterprises, in a way which will prevent them from being absorbed into the great English trusts. Irish banking will develop. Savings which are now invested in foreign securities or left with banks which put them into English loans and mortgages, will be made available for promoting industrial undertakings in Ireland, whether by short loans or permanent investments. Irish looms will be set working on some better business basis than the limited liability company with its frictions and dangers. Irish ships will sail the seas under Irish management and for the benefit of Ireland. Special combined efforts will be made to develop national resources. There are harbours to be improved, lands to be drained, and hills to be covered again with forests.

For these various purposes it may be found necessary to sink some public or co-operative funds in redeeming the requisite land. All buildings and improvements on any land taken over would of course be paid for at their fair value; but as regards the land itself, the ransom

must not be on the old monopoly scale, which would mean the profligate throwing away of public money, or the crippling of the new occupiers with excessive charges. To enable the schemes to start on a sound basis, it is essential that the principle of the common right to the land should be declared, and that the settled policy of giving effect to that principle by taxing land values, should be taken into account. This would give the people the necessary leverage for carrying out any expropriation that may be necessary. If any purchases of land have to take place before the tax has got into effective working, payment should be made on the footing that the land stands charged in equity with its fair contribution to the public revenue. Alternatively, and equally as a matter of equity, the transaction should be on the footing of a reasonable number of years purchase of the old poor-law valuation. The existing practice according to which land has one value—an absurdly low one—when its contribution to public funds is in question, and another value—an absurdly high one—when it becomes necessary to purchase it out of public funds, is morally indefensible.

Under the present system, schemes for settling cultivators are liable to be wrecked,

partly by the cost of the land, and partly by the increased charges in respect of rates and taxes which are imposed on the new occupiers. Under a system of taxing land values, both these difficulties would disappear. While the community would receive the fair value of the land, the occupiers would be free to enjoy and improve it without having to pay anything more than that fair value. The enforcement of the public right to the public value of the land is at the same time the means of securing to the individual the best possible scope for producing private wealth and enjoying it in full.

The recognition of the just rights of the community and of the individual would also clear the way for the necessary development of the national estate by arterial drainage, and by re-afforestation. The districts near the Bann, the Barrow, the Shannon, the Suck, and many other rivers are liable to be submerged in water for many months. A proper system of drainage would make this sour land fertile, and would prevent the destruction which now takes place of corn and hay and standing crops. The scandal of the almost complete dependence of Ireland on imported timber must be remedied by re-planting on her

steep hills, mountain sides and marsh lands the forests which were wantonly destroyed by alien profiteers.†† The English Government might talk for ever about its schemes for planting 50,000 acres at Slievebloom, Glendalough, Ballyhoura and Woodford. The money could not be found, nor could the work be undertaken on any sound financial basis "with the co-operation of the landowners." The initiative and control necessary for the success of such undertakings were lacking, and there was no guarantee that the work, if carried out, would result in anything more than the enrichment of a few monopolists.

But those difficulties will disappear, when there is an Irish Government controlling a revenue from the value of Irish land, and acting on the principle that land value and the results of development by public money should accrue to the public, while the

††The percentage of woodland to the surface area of Ireland is said to be only 1·4. But there is an area in Ireland of from one million to two million acres, which could be better used for tree-growing than for tillage or pasture. In 1916 Ireland imported timber to the value of £2,000,000, of which three-fourths could and should be provided by native timber. There are many industries such as furniture-making, coach-building, making of packing-boxes, bobbins, spools, toys, tool-handles, railway-sleepers, prepared wood for the building trade, which should normally derive their raw material from home-grown timber.



return on the work and expenditure of individuals should accrue to them in full. A fund will be at hand in the national land revenue for the purpose of drainage works and of re-afforestation. This fund could be employed by the public authority itself in draining or planting any land which was acquired (as it might be acquired on fair terms under pressure of the tax) by the nation or local bodies. In that case the profits of the venture would come to the public either directly, or in the shape of the rent or tax payable by the persons to whom the land so improved might be granted. Alternatively, the public funds might be employed in granting loans on easy terms with long periods for repayment to bodies or persons who would undertake the work of improvement or development, and who would then be entitled to the profits in full without having to pay tax on more than the unimproved and undeveloped value of the land. In either case there would be adequate incentive for the work, proper control in carrying it out, and security that the benefits would go where they were justly due.

Lastly, the nation should assert its right to the ownership of mountains and uncultivable hills, and of rivers and

salmon and trout streams. The opportunities for shooting and fishing should be secured for the people by just game laws. The hills and rivers might be let to local councils, which would make suitable regulations as regards sporting rights, and for making all such places freely accessible to the inhabitants and visitors for health, recreation, and enjoyment of their natural charm and wild beauty.

By the adoption of such principles and methods, all the sons and daughters of Ireland would enjoy their fair share in the common inheritance, and would have the best opportunities possible for turning their own capacities to account. The national estate would be developed for the common good. Public rights would be restored, as justice dictates. Private property would be stabilized, as freedom requires, common sense demands, and religion sanctions. Purged of its abuses, property would be regarded with a saner and more genuine respect.

The monopolisation of public wealth by private persons has been countenanced for so long that people have difficulty in clearing their minds about it, and seeing that it has always been wrong. But the Irish people, starting a new life, with their country once

more in their own hands, will see that their land must belong to them all, with equal opportunities for all and special privileges for none. They will recoil from the prospect of seeing their country become like other countries, with their disdainful rich, and their host of poor people struggling for work and wages. Irish common sense will be wary of taking the leaps in the dark which Socialism advocates. The State can never take the place of private enterprise, and how could its officials say what wages each man should receive? Obviously some men's work is worth more than that of others. But if monopoly, by which some can exact more than they are entitled to (thus leaving to others less than *they* are entitled to), were eliminated, the wealth of the country would be shared by all according to what each gave in labour or services, without further need of State interference. Failing such remedy, all the new developments looked for by the Irish people will be hampered, and where they do take place will result in growing inequality of wealth.

Confidence in this policy for Ireland's future is confirmed by the retrospect of her past. The assertion of the right of the community to the land by nationalising land

value—the people themselves in local councils adjusting values and seeing that all get their fair share of land and the full product of their exertions on condition of fulfilling their just obligations, while the representatives of the nation exercise general supervision and allocate the joint fund according to local needs and rights—these are the true ways, these are the old ways adapted to modern conditions of industrial progress. The nation's birthright of land and liberty would be secured. The underlying principles of the Brehon law, as accepted by St. Patrick, the doctrines of Lalor, the rallying cry of the I.R.B., the ideal of Davitt, the advice of Parnell, and the aspirations of Connolly, can thus be put into practical effect. The old, sound basis of Irish freedom and prosperity can thus be restored.

While in other countries revolutions have proceeded, and are even now proceeding, with blindfold violence; while elsewhere the attempt to secure advantages for particular sections of society, without regard to justice and freedom, may end, either in chaos and ruin, or in return to bureaucratic control, special privileges and the discontent which such systems engender, Irish freedom must start on a sound basis from the beginning. The nation in freeing itself must make sure



that all its citizens will share in the prosperity which will come to a free, united Ireland. To leave unredressed the discontent and poverty bred by present economic conditions, would mean a disunited nation. The strength of Ireland can only be rooted in the consciousness of the whole people that each of them has an equal stake in the national well-being.

## IV.

### The Problem of Poverty

IN all the countries of Europe there is the same "social problem," the same "labour question." In the words of Leo XIII., "a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the labouring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself." The peoples are disinherited—shut out from the bounties of nature, denied the comforts, the decencies, the necessities of life. A single rich man may own four or five luxurious mansions in town and country, and beguile his idleness by changing his home for every season of the year. The toiling multitude can only change their mean streets for the work-house. On one side, we see accumulations of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice; on the other, labour, in daily dread of losing its job, and when employed, hardly able to provide food and clothing and shelter for the family, to say nothing of any provision for sickness, old age, or death. As Æ. says: "What profound spiritual life can there

be when the social order almost forces men to battle with each other for the means of existence?" In Ireland, religion and patriotism join in calling for a change in these wicked and disastrous conditions. The triumph of the national cause will inspire a determination in the people to carry out the sacred duty which they owe to themselves and their children—the duty of banishing poverty from their native land.

It is acknowledged by the rich that the "condition of the working-classes ought to be improved," and that their "standard of living ought to be raised." Acts are passed, and associations are formed, to mitigate various phases of the evil. But poverty remains. A residuum of unemployed counteracts the efforts of trade unions to raise the general level of wages. A chronic shortage of house accommodation keeps up house-rents, in spite of a series of Housing Acts. Nominal increases in earnings are accompanied by a higher cost of living. Higher wages and higher prices follow one another round in a vicious circle. When old age pensions are paid out of taxes, or saving is attempted through co-operation, thrift, and temperance, the benefit gained tends steadily to be neutralised by an increase of rent. Large

numbers of workers in Belfast are compelled to live in Portadown, Lisburn, Lurgan, Bangor and other centres upwards of twenty miles from Belfast owing to lack of house accommodation in that city; and they have asked for railway tickets to be issued to them at reduced fares. But one of the effects of a reduction in fares is to raise the value of land, and in such cases the traveller may pay as much in increased rent as he gained by the lowering of his fare.

One of the most urgent of national needs is a complete system of ways of communication and transport—the extension and unifying of railways, linking ocean ports and fishing harbours with the interior, and working in connection with cross-country water-ways and light railways, and with tramways radiating from urban centres, and motor lorries serving rural districts along well-made high roads. An important adjunct to the development of means of communication and transport is the generation and diffusion of cheap motive power in the form of hydraulic and electrical energy. But the benefits of improved means of communication by rail or tramway, by road or bridge, facilities for transport, provision of motive



power—all crystallise into private rent. New streets, parks, open spaces, sanitation, baths, libraries, everything that makes a town healthier and more pleasant to live in or more convenient for business, after being paid for once out of rates or taxes, are paid for over and over again year by year in rent to the ground landlords who have contributed nothing to their cost.

Under the system of taxation imposed by England upon Ireland, land however valuable it may be, however much it may be required for use, is exempt from rates and taxes so long as it is unused, but a heavy burden of rates and taxes is imposed as soon as houses or shops or factories are built and occupied. The result is that land-owners are encouraged by the exemption to withhold land from use until the need of it becomes still greater and they can get a still higher price or rent. Even if they are willing to let their land be used, such use is retarded and the occupation of houses, when built, is made more expensive by the rates and taxes imposed on the occupiers, a burden which is increased by the exemption of the land which is being held idle.

The result is that it is impossible to provide the houses required without charging more

than the people can pay. The total accommodation is insufficient. The competition for such houses as do exist obliges the occupiers to pay an excessive rent for them. That rent far exceeds the payment which would be necessary if houses were supplied and occupied under free conditions, *i.e.*, if land came freely into use as required, and if no further tax or rate were imposed on the house when built and occupied. When houses are built, the occupiers have to pay, not only the cost of the house and the laying out, road-making, etc., but a swollen ground rent and, in addition, a burden of rates, amounting in Dublin to as much as 16s. 11½d. in the pound. Is it any wonder that builders fear to take the land under such conditions? They cannot do so with any hope of paying their way unless the standard of house rent is high enough to meet these charges in addition to yielding them a fair return on their outlay. Thus the supply of houses is restricted and the standard of house rent increased, and overcrowding is prevalent and chronic.

Long before the war, the dearth of decent house accommodation and the resulting degradation, disease, and death had been recognised as a crying scandal, not only in the great cities, but in the smaller towns

and in the country villages. The Departmental Committee appointed to enquire into the housing conditions in Dublin reported, in February, 1914, that 14,000 new houses or dwellings were required as a minimum. This was in addition to the necessity for re-modelling existing tenement houses, so as to provide suitable accommodation for 13,000 families. The Housing Committee of the "Irish Convention" stated that since the date of that Report, 1,956 tenement houses in which 3,989 families were living, have been closed by the Corporation under its statutory powers. In the same period the Corporation have erected 327 houses, and a very much smaller number has been erected by other agencies. The result is that if 14,000 new houses were required in Dublin in 1914, at least 16,500 were required when the Convention reported.

As regards the remaining county boroughs, the Committee of the Convention estimated the shortage of working-class dwellings as follows:—Belfast, 7,500; Cork, 1,250; Londonderry, 1,000; Limerick, 2,000; Waterford, 700, giving a total deficiency for the county boroughs of 28,950, which works out at one new house to every thirty of the population.

In the 90 urban districts and 29 municipal towns in Ireland, there is the same urgent need for more houses, and also in many smaller towns, *e.g.* Kildare, Tralee and Mullingar, which are not "urban areas" in the legal sense. The Committee estimated the total number of new working-class houses urgently required in urban areas in Ireland at 67,500; they estimated the total capital expenditure required to deal with the problem as £27,000,000, and they proposed that 50 per cent. of the charges should be provided by the Government.

It is often assumed that there is a "housing problem" as distinct from the poverty problem, and independent of the system of land tenure and taxation. People say, "Private building enterprise has failed: let us have State or Municipal building." It was overlooked that under existing economic conditions builders must fail, and through no fault of their own. It was imagined that public authorities with a long purse could succeed where private builders had failed, and that this could be done without altering the economic conditions. In these circumstances the frontal attacks made on the problem by the municipalities in Ireland and Great Britain proved as costly and disappointing as the



attempts to break through the entrenched fronts in the European War.

The public authority buys up slums at exorbitant prices. Handling money which belongs not to themselves but to the struggling ratepayers, the Town Councillors can indulge in easy generosity to the land monopolists, who on their side are encouraged to pitch their demands high from the knowledge that the public purse is deep. The land is excessively dear, because it was excessively overcrowded and yielded a large rent roll wrung out of the misery and helplessness of the occupiers. Slums are demolished and new and healthy dwellings are built. But the slum dwellers do not return to the municipal dwellings; they go elsewhere and create other slums.

Meanwhile the former landlords go off with the money in their pockets to repeat their success elsewhere. They re-invest their ill-gotten gains in similar "property," and extort fresh rack rents, which grow higher as the property gets more overcrowded and dilapidated and insanitary, until in the fulness of time they can obtain from the public authority another certificate that their "property" is unfit for human habitation, and are rewarded for their services to mankind by a fresh grant of public money.

The poor whom it was intended to benefit have been driven, with the added expense and suffering of removal, to quarters probably worse than the old. The unjust rates which already press so hardly and are in themselves a main cause of the shortage and dearness and badness of houses, are increased. The general level of rent is, if anything, raised. Private enterprise, which must in any case be relied on to supply the bulk of the houses needed, is discouraged and deterred. The high prices which the long purse of the municipality has encouraged the landowners to stand out for, have resulted in a general stiffening of the price of land, and where the municipal rents are charged so as to incur a loss on the outlay, it is impossible for builders to undertake similar enterprises on a business footing.

The following account of the procedure of the Dublin Corporation has been given by Rev. L. McKenna in *Studies* of June, 1919 :—

“ This procedure is simplicity itself : a slum area is bought up, it is levelled, and houses are then built on it. Let us see what this means. Crowds of poor people are dispossessed. What becomes of them? They flow out over the surrounding slum districts. It can hardly be contended that they can easily find accommodation in those surround-

ing districts; for (as we have seen) Dublin is a scandal among the cities for overcrowding, and of course it is the slums that are overcrowded. These evicted people, then, pour into the surrounding districts, already congested, making them more congested, more unhealthy, more demoralising. And notice, this evil is not a merely passing one. Its results are permanent. The new dwellings, whether block-buildings or separate cottages, that have been built on the cleared areas have never been sufficient to rehouse anything like the number of people who had been evicted. The result, therefore, of each such levelling of a slum site is that the surrounding slums become still more congested than before, are likely to remain in this worse state, and are congested with the very poorest, for whom the new houses built on the cleared space are too dear.

“The system seems a fatuous one, and all the more fatuous as it is one of the dearest which could have been devised. The legal expenses of proving title are, of course, great owing to the number of owners affected; the clearing away of old houses is costly; but, above all, the cost of these slum sites is appallingly high. The average cost of them has been over £6,000 an acre (in one case it was £11,600 an acre). Of course the rents paid by the new tenants are quite insufficient to pay the interest on such expenses. For the houses built before 1913 and costing £354,215 15s. 0d. the gross yearly sum to be paid by the Corporation was over £20,000. To meet this, rents brought in only £11,000, so that the city rates were burdened with

£9,000 a year. Things are worse now, the deficit for the year ending March, 1918, being £19,987 13s. 3d.

“This seems a high price to pay for a system which not only does not provide a single proper house for the very poor, but by increasing the congestion of the slums, places the general body of the poor in a worse condition than before, and (to crown all) by intensifying the struggle for accommodation in the crowded slums makes these slums more valuable to their owners and therefore more difficult to buy up in the future.

“Can it be said that there is a dearth of virgin soil? According to the Borough Surveyor’s evidence in 1913, there were within the city boundary 1,146 acres of virgin land, not to mention a considerable amount of derelict land—enough to provide sites at the rate of twelve houses an acre for almost all the 14,000 houses required; while just outside the boundary at places like Artane, Santry, Finglas, Pelletstown, on the North side, and Crumlin, Terenure, Milltown, and Merrion on the South, there is an unlimited quantity of available land. Some of these sites outside, and indeed some inside the boundary, are lacking in facilities for communicating with the centre of the city, but none of the authorities who speak of this matter seem to suspect any great difficulty about the extension of the tram system and the provision of workpeople’s fares.”

Father McKenna also refers to “the fifteen-and-a-half acres of vacant land on



the North Lotts, and the superabundant land at Croydon Park, Marino, etc., which would more than house all the dockers very conveniently for their work." It is understood that the Dublin Corporation have now prepared a scheme for building on some of this land, but the financial prospect does not seem to be encouraging. In so far as the cost of the site stands in the way, it is obvious that if this vacant land were taxed and rated on its value for building purposes, the owners would be more disposed to sell or let it for such purposes on reasonable terms. But it seems likely that, even if the land could be got on fair terms and the buildings were completed, the burden of the present rates when added to the cost of land and the cost of construction, would so swell the annual outgoings that they would exceed any rents which the occupiers could pay. Under present conditions it seems impossible to build even on these vacant sites without throwing a heavy burden on the rates.

The housing schemes recently announced by the British Government are doomed to the same failure as the previous attempts of the municipalities to break through the difficulties caused by present economic conditions. The English Minister of Health

admitted that the "enormous cost of acquisition" of slum areas was "the main cause why so little progress had been made," and his Bill contained a makeshift provision, which previous experience suggests will be of little practical effect, that the price to be paid for premises which are dangerous and prejudicial to health shall not exceed the value of the site if used for dwellings conforming with the law. The loss on the schemes is to be shared between the local authorities and the Exchequer—that is to say, the cost of providing houses for a favoured few will be met in part by an increase in the rates, which are a main cause of the present shortage, and the balance will be added to the burden of taxes under which the people are staggering, or go to swell the daily growing deficit which has to be met by borrowings at ever higher rates of interest. The London County Council on 15th July, 1919, approved a scheme for the provision of not less than 29,000 new dwellings. The total cost was estimated at approximately thirty million pounds, and there would be a total annual deficit of over £1,200,000. The whole scheme is already admitted to be bankrupt. According to a statement by the Minister of Health on 17th November, 1919, 124

houses had been completed, and 5,382 were in course of erection—in face of an admitted shortage of half-a-million. Building is not keeping pace with new demands, and the situation is growing more serious every week. The scheme of subsidising the occupants of new houses having failed, the Government are now said to be contemplating the offer of a subsidy to private builders to provide the houses.

Under the Irish Housing Bill the financial terms differ from those of the English Bill and are even more obviously unworkable. For Ireland, the Treasury agrees to find 25s. for every 20s. of rent collected; in England, the ratepayers' liability was to be limited to a penny rate. Under the Irish Bill it is impossible to ascertain, until the houses are built and let, the exact amount which the ratepayers might have to pay; but it is clear that the terms have been so arranged that the authorities will have either to charge rents which cannot be paid, or else impose a burden on the ratepayers which they will be unable to bear. The Joint Committee of the Irish Royal Institute of Architects and the Dublin Industrial Development Association has reported that it is hopeless at the present time to pursue the subject further. Meanwhile the cost of

all building materials continues to mount up.

The seriousness of the present deadlock calls for a careful analysis of the economic conditions which lie at the root of the problem. Land, whether it be the site of a house, or the clay field, quarry, or hillside from which the raw materials for a house and its approaches can be derived, is not produced by labour and expenditure. It is there all the time, and if its value be taxed there will be no less land, and it will be no less used; on the contrary, more land will be available for use, and it will be better used. With more land available, the rent or price to be paid for land will be reduced. There will be more sites available on easier terms, and the cost of occupying houses built on them will be less. More sources of building material will be opened up: brick, stone, cement, slates, sand, lime, timber, will become cheaper and more plentiful: the cost of construction of houses will be less. This would enable more houses to be built and let at lower rents. But buildings are not forthcoming unless they are produced by labour and expenditure. Just as, if you tax tea, there will be less tea and what there is will cost more; so if you tax buildings, there will be fewer



buildings and they will cost more: the supply will be reduced until the price or rent obtainable for them rises sufficiently to cover the amount of the tax.

While the neglect of these economic considerations has created the housing problem both in Ireland and in Great Britain, the conditions resulting from the war have no doubt aggravated the present difficulties. The cost of construction of houses has been artificially increased by high freights and the lack of transport facilities, by the diversion of labour from its normal productive activities, and by the nominal rise in wages which has accompanied the increase in the cost of living. So far as Ireland depends on imported timber and other raw material, the trouble is aggravated by the toll of double dues and freights which has to be paid so long as the only approach to Ireland from oversea is by the channel ferry. That must be remedied by establishing direct communication by sea with Sweden and the other countries from which supplies are obtainable.

In due course such supplies must be supplemented by the home-grown timber, which under proper economic conditions Ireland can produce in abundance. Timber-growing, stone-getting, and brick-making

could be developed on the lines suggested in the last chapter, by direct public action or by the stimulus of a tax or rent, payable by private persons or societies in whose hands the natural resources may be left for development. While a payment should be required according to the value of the natural resources, no further rate or tax should be imposed on the working of the undertaking. This would secure the product coming forward in the greatest quantity and at the lowest price compatible with proper payment for the management and labour concerned. Transport by rail, road and waterway should be extended and cheapened on the same principle.

The difficulty as to the cost of labour would then right itself. The nominally high wages paid in the building-trade, while they are not really high wages because they are more than neutralised by the greater increase in the cost of living, do nevertheless under present conditions keep up the cost of building, and make houses fewer and dearer than they should be. At present we are in a vicious circle of high prices and nominally high wages. It is impossible to solve the housing problem by continual increases in subsidies paid out of taxes falling mainly on industry, whether

those subsidies are paid to the occupants of State-built houses or to private builders to enable them to build the houses. But it is equally impossible to solve it by continual all-round increases in wages, which, in the absence of subsidies, would be necessary to enable workpeople to pay the high rents for houses built under present conditions. The only possible solution lies in allowing the workers to get at the land and natural resources on fair terms. The nominally high wages, which stand in the way of house-building, are due to the high cost of living caused by high prices. If a way is found for industry to break through the barriers which prevent it from supplying its own wants, those high prices would come down. Houses could cost less, but the real wages of builders would be improved by the reduction in the cost of living.

At the same time, with the opening up of natural resources, there would be fresh opportunities for work and production, which would tend to a further increase in real wages and a further reduction in the price of commodities. The financial position of the workers would be really improved, and they would be able to pay enough house-rent to cover the reduced cost of building. This is the only way to break

through the vicious circles of larger and larger subsidies paid out of taxes on industry, and of further and further increases in nominal wages which never countervail, but rather aggravate, the evil of high cost of living.

When the nation exercises control over its own land and secures the full utilisation of its natural resources, labour and capital will be able to supply the wants of the community and to receive their own due return. To open up all suitable sites and bring the rent or price which has to be paid for them down to a fair level by taxing their real value; to make building materials plentiful and cheap by direct importation and by the utilisation of natural resources on fair terms; and to lessen the cost of the occupation of houses by taking the rates and taxes off occupiers; this is the true housing policy. Steps must be taken on those lines if public authorities are to build without burdening the ratepayers, and if private builders are to be able to conduct their business with success and to supply houses in numbers adequate to the demand and at a price which people could pay.

The report of the Convention, that in Irish urban areas alone there is an immediate need of 67,500 houses at a cost of



£27,000,000, to say nothing of the need of rural areas, is terrible testimony to the ruin and misery produced by unjust alien laws. The remedy proposed by the Convention is pitiful. They do not suggest any means of lowering the cost of sites or of materials, or of increasing real wages so as to enable the workers to pay the proper cost of house accommodation. Their only recommendation is that 50 per cent. of the total capital cost of the new houses should be begged as a dole from "the central Government." They reported that the houses must be "erected without throwing any but a small charge on local rates," and that "if this condition is not satisfied, the needs of the situation are never likely to be met." But the way to satisfy this condition is not by begging or borrowing from the English Government, or by taking money from Irish citizens as taxpayers out of one pocket in order to put it back into their other pocket as occupiers of houses. The way to satisfy the condition is to remove the present economic causes which, as explained above, swell the cost of site, the cost of materials, and the cost of occupancy. Then the combined efforts of private enterprise and the local authorities, the Public Utility Societies, and possibly a new authority for

Dublin extending over a larger area than that of the existing municipality, would be able in normal circumstances to supply all the houses needed on a business footing.

It must never be forgotten that the "housing problem" does not stand by itself, but is a phase of the omnipresent poverty problem. In the country districts the housing deadlock is due not only to the difficulty of getting sites, but also to the low level of the wages of the labourers, which makes it impossible for them to pay a rent to cover the cost of decent cottages. This has given rise in Ireland to the series of "Labourers' Acts" and amending Acts from 1883 onwards and the grants by the Congested Districts Board, with the object of providing labourers' dwellings out of public loans and subsidies. Under the Labourers' Acts 36 per cent. of the charge is paid out of the taxes. Such procedure is a symptom of the unsatisfactory conditions into which rural life in Ireland has fallen under unjust laws. There is no real necessity for a limited number of people to live in subsidised houses at the cost of the taxpayer, and for others to go without the houses they require. Such a position arises only because the people are fleeced of their

earnings and shut out from exercising their industry.

Doles are no proper cure or amends for this wrong. The materials for houses exist in Ireland and should be brought within reach of the hands able and wishing to build houses. Given access to sites and raw material, the people could provide their own houses. Given access to land to cultivate they could develop their industry by the aid of agricultural credit banks, and could increase their earnings by co-operation. They could then either pay builders to provide them with houses, or combine their resources in co-partnership schemes for building houses, of which they would be their own joint landlords, and which would be built of good design and according to a well-planned scheme.

To-day we have slums in cities and hovels in the country; low wages and unemployment; emigration as the only alternative to starvation. At the same time hundreds of thousands of acres are held unused, or scarcely used—labour-starved. In 1846 there were 880,000 agricultural holdings in Ireland supporting a population of eight millions. Systematic evictions have reduced the number of the population and the number of holdings. For the reinstatement

of evicted tenants alone—the wrecks of the land-wars—there were 14,000 claims lodged with the Land Commission. There is abundance of good land in Ireland to supply the needs of the present population. In addition to the landlords' demesnes, etc. of which no estimate is available, the area of the untenanted land suitable for the settlement of the agricultural population is estimated to comprise 2,076 ranches of over 500 acres each, and 8,368 ranches from 200 to 500 acres each.

Æ. says in *The National Being*:—"The long war over the land, which resulted in the transference of the land from landlord to cultivator, has advanced us part of the way; but the Land Acts offered no complete solution. We were assured by hot enthusiasts of the magic of proprietorship, but *Ireland has not tilled a single acre more since the Land Acts were passed*. Our rural exodus continued without any Moses to lead us to Jerusalems of our own. At every station boys and girls bade farewell to their friends." "How," he asks, "can we make the countryside in Ireland a place which nobody would emigrate from?" "There are," he says, "wide areas where there is stagnation and decay. The stagnation is most obvious in rural



districts. It is so general that it has been often assumed that there was something inherent in rural life which made the countryman slow in mind as his own cattle. But this is not so, as I think can be shewn. The real reason for the stagnation is that the country population is not organised."

Organisation is a blessed word, and mutual help by combined action is natural among sociable people living in a free community. English policy and English land laws have tended to isolate the farmers from one another and from the labourers. The real reason of stagnation is not any lack of will and ability in the people to combine for their mutual advantage, but in the circumstances which deprive them of the power to act effectively together, and drive them to struggle among themselves for the artificially limited means of livelihood. Æ. himself indicates this by his reference to the prosperity of "the true rural communities in ancient Ireland," and by his description of the troubles which afflict the emigrants even in new countries. "It seems," he says, "to be so in Canada and in the States even, countries which we in Europe for long regarded as mainly agricultural. . . . And yet we find the Minister of Agriculture in Canada announcing a decline in the rural

population of Eastern Canada.” “As children sprung from the loins of diseased parents manifest at an early age the same disease in their constitution, so Canada and the States, though in their national childhood, seem already threatened by the same disease from which classic Italy perished, and whose ravages to-day make Great Britain seem to the acute diagnoser of political health to be like a fruit—ruddy without, but eaten away within and rotten at the core.”

But this disease is not lack of “organisation”: it is land monopoly. *Latifundia perdidere Italiam*. In Canada, settlers have been forced to the “back of beyond,” while fertile tracts nearer the towns and railways are held unused by speculators waiting for the rise in price which will result from the growing influx of immigrants driven from their native countries by land monopoly. In 1912 the Chairman of the Anglo-Canadian Lands (1912) Limited told the shareholders of the construction of a new railway within an average distance of fifteen miles from the company’s lands. He said “So important an effect is this line certain to have upon land values in its vicinity that your Board decided to withdraw from sale all land

within four miles from the line under construction." The Canadian Pacific Railway received huge free grants of land from the Government. Part of the land granted free was purchased back by the Government for 10,189,521 dollars. Besides that land repurchased, the Company received land grants extending to 28,023,188 acres. Of these 16,541,056 have been sold, and have realised 123,810,124 dollars. The lands still unsold and being held back to increase their monopoly value are carried in the Company's accounts at 119,250,000 dols.†

Æ. has found the problem of the agricultural labourer to be "the most difficult of

†Resolutions by the score have been passed by all sorts of bodies in Canada denouncing land speculation and the exploitation of the public domain for private gain. The organised farmers of Canada have repeatedly demanded the institution of land value taxation for federal purposes. In the recently-revised platform of the farmers of Canada, as adopted by the Supreme Council known as the Council of Agriculture, the first plank on taxation calls for "a direct tax upon unimproved land value, including all natural resources." This platform has been endorsed by all the provincial organisations. The War Veterans' Association, in a memorial presented to the Federal Government, called for the taxation of land values. The Labour organisations have generally endorsed the principle, as have also many religious bodies, municipal conventions, etc. The latest revised platform of the Canadian Trades Congress calls for "lessening taxation on industry and increasing it on land values." These demands are almost certain to result in a Federal land value tax in the not distant future.

any." "The basis of economic independence in his industry is the possession of land, and that is not readily to be obtained in Ireland." "None have contributed so to thicken the horde of Irish exiles as the rural labourers. Three hundred thousand of them in less than my lifetime have left the fields of Ireland for the factories of the new world." But this is not due to the niggardliness of nature. It is the result of the monopolisation of its bounties. Æ. says: "We can well understand a landlord not liking to divide his land into small holdings, with all the attendant troubles which in Ireland beset a landlord with small farmers on his estate. But I think landowners in Ireland could be found who would rent land to a co-operative society of skilled labourers." "With fair rents fixed, hundreds of thousands of people could be planted comfortably on the land in Ireland and produce more wealth from it than could ever be produced from grazing lands, and agricultural workers and the sons of farmers who now emigrate could become economically independent."

The land is there, and, as Æ. says, the possession of it would give the people employment, economic independence, increased wealth. All that is needed is



to find landlords willing to allow it, or to find means of inducing them to allow it. Then co-operation among farmers and labourers would have free scope, and would bring to the Irish people the benefits which *Æ.* so passionately desires for them. Then “the creation of a rural civilisation” which he says is “the greatest need of our time,” but which, he fears, “may not come in our days,” will be in sight.

The way towards real civilisation, both rural and urban, lies in freeing the land for all the purposes that the life of the people requires. If rural labourers could get a share of the land for their own use; if mines and quarries, fisheries and forests, and the services of transport, were offering them employment; if the diffusion of cheap power were establishing new industries in the country districts calling for their labour; they would gain a new economic independence. If more families were finding employment on the fertile lands of the neighbouring counties, there would be fewer bidding against each other to obtain the work available in Dublin and Belfast. As the competition lessened, wages would rise.

At the same time the families re-established on the land would be producing wealth. They would have money to spend, and would

have requirements which would make them fresh customers for the shops and the factories in the towns, and for the carrying and distributing trades. With fresh sites for shops and factories available on easier terms, and the burden of rates taken off buildings and improvements, the towns would be ready and able to meet these new demands profitably. The growth and prosperity of the towns would in turn help forward rural development and lead to the profitable establishment of dairy-farms and market-gardens near to customers in the towns. With land made available for re-forestation, and with the development of coal and minerals and quarries and transport arranged for on just terms, the requisite output of raw material of all kinds for manufacture would come forward steadily at fair prices. The workers in forest, mine and quarry, and on rail and road, receiving good wages, would again in their turn afford a fresh market for the products of the farms and factories.

While the revival of the Irish mercantile marine and foreign trade would proceed in accordance with the national programme, the importance of the home market must never be overlooked—a market which would be extended by the development of the

nation's own neglected estate. Unless that development takes place, no amount of foreign trade will produce evenly diffused prosperity or solve the labour problem. Merchant ships may sail from crowded ports, laden with coal dug in darkness and danger from the bowels of the earth. Great factory chimneys may smoke day and night and the machines may toss out, with all the force and speed and ingenuity of applied science, piles of goods for the strange inhabitants of distant continents. Shipyards may ring with the blows of hammers. But there is no rest or adequate reward for the toiling millions, scarcely breathing space between their exhausting efforts. Belfast with its overcrowded slums and sweated women workers has not solved the labour problem, any more than Dublin with its starving unemployed struggling at the factory gates. The Clyde each year turned out a greater tonnage of shipping than the whole German Empire. But the Medical Officer for Health for Glasgow reported :—“ There are in Glasgow 31,000 one-room houses, containing 100,000 people, or  $3\frac{3}{4}$  persons to each room; and 53,000 two-roomed houses, containing 263,000 persons, or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to each room; 5,000 of the one-room and 25,000 of the two-room

houses contain lodgers, and in some cases six, seven or eight people sleep in one room. It is these houses that give the enormous death-rate. The exhausted air and poor feeding fill our streets with bandy-legged children. There the death-rate is 38 per 1,000, while in the districts of larger houses it is only 16." Little wonder that the dawn of peace was ushered in with a wild and angry red sky over the Clyde! Little wonder that the workers of Belfast should strike for better conditions, and that the workers of the rest of Ireland should stand by them as brothers and join in a united demand for a freer and better national life!

True national wealth consists in the well-being of all the citizens; and while land monopoly remains, the wealth of the privileged classes is the wrecker's spoil obtained from the destruction of the ship with its crew and cargo. Under present conditions hard work, thrift, improved methods of production, are doomed to the same fate as the industry and ingenuity of a hive of bees, from which the bee-keeper extracts all the honey except the modicum necessary to keep the bees alive through the winter. Rent and monopoly profits rise higher and higher, but the workers who create them cannot touch them, any more



than Tantalus could put his parched lips to the stream flowing by him.

A people robbed of their rights in the land must remain impoverished; the more they struggle, the tighter do their bonds become. They huddle together in slums and underground cellars to escape rent, and the more they overcrowd, the higher do rents rise against them. As they try to advance along the road of industrial progress, the higher becomes the toll levied upon them by monopoly. If they increase their productive power, the larger becomes the tribute demanded for the use of the sole source of production, the land and the stores which it contains. While that source is monopolised and the people denied access to it, the growth of population, which under free conditions would bring increased wealth to all, strengthens the power of the landlord to extort high rents and provides the capitalist with an overflowing supply of cheap labour.

The competition of landless men drives up rents, and while their own needs remain unsatisfied, they make the position of those who do get land harder and more precarious. But there is no natural necessity for this desperate competition; it is the outcome of the unjust privileges of land-

owners who withhold their land from use. In the towns, the unemployed, while themselves unable to earn anything, keep down the earnings of those who get employment. But there is no natural necessity for the existence of unemployment and the desperate competition for a bare living. It is the outcome of the monopolising of the means of production and livelihood.

As Æ. has said in *The National Being*, "Land purchase, I believe, on the old basis cannot be continued. Yet we will demand the intensive cultivation of the national estate and increased production of wealth, especially of food stuffs. The large area of agricultural land laid down for pasture is not so productive as tilled land, does not sustain so large a population, and there will be more reasons in the future than in the past for changing the character of farming in these areas." These results will be attained, and with gain instead of loss to the taxpayer, if the landowners instead of being bribed to part with their land, are called upon to make a contribution to revenue according to its value. Further financial juggles for the benefit of the landlords, such as those proposed by the Convention, will not solve the problem. No real relief or emancipation will come from fur-

ther payments being made to landlords by sitting tenants. The untenanted, undeveloped lands of Ireland must be opened up for the use of the landless Irish. The land values of the towns and cities must be drawn on for the needs of the community. The wealth produced by Irish workers from Irish lands of all kinds must be secured in full for the Irish themselves.

The English Government's nominees in the Convention desired to rush the Irish land question and conclude a sweeping deal with the tenants on terms still more favourable to the landlords than those now open to them, before the Irish people obtained control of their own affairs. They recommended that the new Irish Government should be debarred for twenty years from dealing with the landlords' demesnes and home farms. They passed over in silence the fact that the land values of the Irish towns are being appropriated by a class to the impoverishment of the people, and that if this injustice is not remedied it will grow more serious as the towns regain their prosperity. The Report of the Convention indicated only a wish to save the landlords with their spoils while there was yet time. The piteous appeals by the remnant of the Party at Westminster for doles and grants and sub-

sidies cannot help the solution of this problem, any more than the Kildare Street Club's lucubrations on "reconstruction." The nation must assert its right to develop its own resources by its own exertions. To do this, it needs no doles or subsidies; but, on the other hand, it must have the right to enjoy its own. No more ransom must be paid away for the right to use Irish land: Irish money is needed and should be applied in the development of Irish land for the benefit of the Irish. Free nationhood involves making the land of the nation with all its actual and potential resources, available for the common good of the whole nation. In the establishment of that right lies the solution of the problem of poverty.



## V.

# Towards a Co-Operative Commonwealth

THE re-builders of Irish Ireland will naturally focus their attention on the special characteristics and requirements of their own country. They will have regard to its geographical position and physical resources. They will look to the history and character of the people, and their immediate needs on emerging from the struggle for freedom which has distracted their energies so long from peaceful development. The problems of national education; of national health, freed from degrading associations with an alien poor law; the development of harbours and means of communication; co-operation; the revival of the mercantile marine and foreign trade; — all these matters will demand special attention. But in every branch of their work the framers of the new polity must bear in mind the general conditions according to which energies are free or fettered, and wealth is fairly or unfairly distributed. They will

do well to take account of the experience of other countries, where national unity has been achieved without social justice, and where political rights have done so little to secure economic freedom.

The recent uprisings in Europe, which struck the sceptres from the hands of a Czar, two Emperors, and about thirty kings and minor dynasts, were social revolutions. They overthrew autocracy; but their main-spring was the desire for economic justice. They claimed national independence, in the hope that free nations would form a new international brotherhood. They aimed at the destruction of the privileged interests, which, under cover of appeals for patriotic unity, plunder the workers at home, and in order to secure fresh fields to exploit with their surplus gains, conscript their victims to perish in predatory wars. A world-wide struggle is now in progress. From the debris of revolution, or by evolution and economic re-adjustment, the peoples intend to build up new commonwealths. Labour has challenged the old social order, which allowed the few to appropriate the bounties intended by nature for all, and compelled the workers to stand in a slave-market waiting for someone to buy them.

This movement was precipitated by the horrors and sufferings of the war, but it is taking place in the victorious countries as well as in the conquered, in republics as well as monarchies, and is spreading among the neutral nations. It springs from the long pent-up sense of injustice, and from the workers' new consciousness of their power, and from their longing for a fuller life. It finds its opportunity in the necessity for reconstructing industry, which has been dislocated by the war.

In some respects Ireland has escaped the calamities suffered by other nations, and emerges in a comparatively favourable condition. She will share in that impulse towards a just reconstruction of society which is travelling in mighty waves over Europe, and with her nationhood restored that impulse will throb through Ireland with special vigour. Her Government will recognise the part which the workers with their revolutionary zeal have played in the fulfilment of national aspirations. Notwithstanding the sacrifice of valuable lives (laid down on the continents of Europe and Asia in the Quixotic belief that such sacrifice was sealing Ireland's right to freedom and was winning similar rights for other oppressed peoples), Ireland

has not suffered so much as other countries in loss of population, and partly owing to the restriction on emigration has now within her shores a larger number of sons and daughters in the springtime and prime of life than she has had for many years. But in common with other nations Ireland has suffered from the high prices arising from the withdrawal of labour from useful industry, from the inflation of credit, and from the meddling and restriction of controls, embargoes, and blockades. Some neutral countries have suffered even more than the belligerents in this respect. In England, at the time of the armistice, the cost of food had risen to 133 per cent. of the pre-war figure, whereas the increase in Norway stood at 175 per cent. and in Sweden at 220 per cent. as compared with 153 per cent. in Italy and 144 per cent. in France.

In the meanwhile there has been a rise in nominal wages, but not sufficient to cover the rise in the prices of food, clothing and other necessities of life. As the urgent demand for labour outran the reduced supply, it was impossible to keep down wages to the old level, especially in face of the ever-rising cost of living and the fabulous profiteering of the capitalists. As



wages rose, the price of the product was put up further on the pretext of covering the rise in wages, but in fact to increase the employers' profit; and these soaring prices were paid out of ever-growing public borrowings at the taxpayers' expense. The profligate expenditure for destructive instead of productive purposes produced at the time a superficial air of prosperity, which was fictitious rather than actual, for the increase in nominal wages failed to keep pace with the increase in the cost of living. In any case such apparent prosperity was bound to be temporary only. In March, 1919, the number of unemployed persons whose donation policies remained lodged at the Employment Exchanges exceeded a million, and the approximate cost was about £1,300,000 per week. The subsidy towards the cost of bread amounted to over fifty millions per annum. When the public borrowing ceases, the source of war-time wages and unemployed donations will be cut off, while the labour market will be flooded with the discharged soldiers and munition workers.

It is not on subsidies or nominal increases of wages accompanied by higher prices that any class of labour can rely to improve its position. Before the recent Coal Commis-

sion a representative of the miners said :—  
“ The miners are much more in favour of keeping down the price of coal and other commodities than of having high wages to meet high prices.” It is to keep down the price of coal, as well as to improve their own position, that the miners demand the nationalisation of minerals and the joint control of the mining industry. The Wages Boards established by the Corn Production Act no doubt have assisted agricultural labourers to combine and so helped to raise their status. But it was the shortage of labour, together with the increased demand for it consequent on the compulsion put on landowners to use land during the war, which improved the bargaining position of the labourers and enabled them to secure such rises in wages as have occurred. Even so, the rise in wages has not kept pace with the rise in prices.

The way to increase real wages is, not to guarantee high prices at the expense of the taxpayer, but to alter the economic conditions which keep land out of use, and to bring down prices by increasing production. While this would benefit the labourers, it would not be contrary to the interests of the farmers. The guaranteed high prices for what they have to sell are,

to say the least, a doubtful boon, accompanied as they are by high prices for what they have to buy — implements and machinery, seeds, feeding stuffs, and manures—and by the high wages of labour, which, while they do not benefit the labourer because they are neutralised by the high cost of living, nevertheless hamper the farmer.

A general lowering of prices through a general increase in production would benefit all workers, both farmers and labourers. The only losers, by the cessation of subsidies, the opening up of the land to productive industry, and the consequent fall in the general level of prices, would be the monopolists. Taxpayers would be relieved; and all *bona fide* producers and traders would benefit by an extension of their market by the increase in the purchasing power of their customers throughout the country. This would be a much healthier state of affairs than any enrichment of landlords and profiteers out of subsidies paid by the community in taxes, and out of selling at high prices for export to England the produce of Irish land which is needed for the support of the Irish people. In these ways the temporary improvement in farming which has taken place under the

artificial conditions of the war would become permanent. Its benefits, instead of being largely fictitious, would become real and substantial, and instead of being gained by a class at the expense of the community, would extend to all for the common good.

In England at present, with the prospect of employment growing less and wages falling, the working people are faced with an increase of 130 per cent. in the price of food and clothing, a universal house-famine, and an unheard-of burden of taxation which will keep up prices and retard the revival of industry. If Ireland remained tied to England she would have the same difficulties to contend with, comforted only by a grudging share of doles and subsidies. The essential thing for Ireland is that she should have control over her own resources and the method of developing them. She must be mistress in her own house, with power to set it in order in her own way, free from the burden of English taxation and from participation in the English Parliament's shop-window dressing schemes of relief and reconstruction. The task which is now before Ireland is to turn her own goodly heritage to account by means of the hands and brains of her own sons and daughters. The true commonwealth must be established



by the whole community of Irish citizens working in free association for the good of all. This will require something more than the repatriation of the old inmates of Dublin Castle. With English domination must go also the imported system of class domination resting on monopoly and privilege.

To break away from that unIrish, selfish system will require not only determination, but a clear comprehension of the evils of the old system and of the principles upon which the new can be securely built. Vested interests have grown strong and expert at dragging red herrings across the scent. The fundamental underlying struggle between monopoly and industry gives rise to innumerable conflicts and antagonisms on the surface. On all sides there appear to be conflicting interests—landowners and users and would-be users of land; farmers and labourers; employers and workmen; agriculturists and manufacturers; direct taxpayers and indirect taxpayers; ratepayers and ground-landlords; accumulated wealth, and labour living from hand to mouth. Without some fundamental solution based on justice, there seems to be no escape from indiscriminate, endless strife. Labour itself has not achieved complete unity of front.

Workers in field and in factory; on railways and on roads; on quays and in shipyards; navvies and clerks; skilled mechanics and labourers—each group seems to have its own particular interest, its own special problem to solve. Each worker is also both producer and consumer, and as such appears to have in himself diverse and possibly conflicting interests.

But no section of labour can rightly or successfully separate itself from the other sections, nor can labour as a whole separate itself from the body of the community. All citizens have equal rights, and the well-being of each is bound up with that of others. Labour, therefore, must found its claim on justice, and must be able to point to the source from which its increased remuneration can be derived without inflicting injury on innocent fellow-sufferers, without involving the community in loss, and without infringing the equal rights of all others. This source, from which the cup of labour can be filled, is to be found in the communal value of land which is now appropriated by a class, and in the increased production of wealth and increased remuneration of labour which would come from freeing all those natural opportunities

for production which the land alone provides.

In economic discussion, the word "land" is used to signify the crust of the earth with all its natural utilities. Man requires land to live on. None of his material wants can be satisfied without the use of land. But land is limited in quantity : it was not, and cannot be, produced by man. Therefore it is necessary for the members of the community to make arrangements among themselves with regard to the use of land; and the well-being of the community depends upon the nature of those arrangements.

Some pieces of land are more valuable than others because they are more fertile, or contain coal or minerals, or have natural advantages of position, as on the banks of navigable rivers, or beside natural harbours, or at meeting points of natural routes of commerce. As population grows, it tends to concentrate in certain localities. Some situations are naturally favourable for industries, and some are specially attractive for residence. In country districts market towns grow up. Private business and the affairs of local and national government become centralised at the capitals. Land there becomes more valuable, not because the soil is more fertile,

but because there is a special demand for positions at and near the centres of population. A site for a shop in Grafton Street is more valuable than one in a remote village, because it is situated among richer and more numerous customers. The rent of houses in Dublin squares is greater than that of houses in country towns, not because a house costs more to build there, but because there is a larger number of well-to-do people wishing to reside there. If a town is growing, plots of land in the outskirts become more valuable, not because the owner has done anything to them, but simply because the growth of population has created a demand for such plots on which to build houses.

Rent, therefore, in the economic sense,† comes from the demand for land of varying degrees of usefulness. The rent of any piece of land depends on the degree of its superiority to the worst land in use—what is called “at the margin of cultivation.” The rents of agricultural land represent the

†The word “rent” is used in economic discussion to mean the annual value which pieces of land have, exclusive of the value of any buildings or works on them. This meaning must be distinguished from the sense in which the word is commonly used to mean the payment for a property as a whole, including the land and any improvements in it and any buildings and permanent fixtures.



differences between the yield returned by the worst land which is used for agriculture and the yields returned by the better lands which are naturally more productive in varying degrees. Land at and near the centres of population yields a better return to building than to agriculture, and this return increases by degrees according as the demand is greater, so that in the heart of a city a piece of bare land is worth a very high rent.

The land value which arises from the presence and demand of population is further increased by the expenditure of public money in providing roads, sanitation, police, parks, public buildings and all the requirements of a community. A hundred years ago Dunleary (Kingstown) was an agricultural holding. The people who occupied the place had little taxation to pay; only county cess, and a poor rate of which the landlord paid half. In consequence of the Government building a harbour there, the place became a town. A town commission was formed, which later became an urban district council. The needs of the growing town were met, not by a levy on the ground landlord whose land was being increased in value, but by new rates upon the occupiers. Out of those rates, the cost of providing all

the requirements and amenities of the town was paid for. The result was that the value of the land was increased at the expense of the population for the benefit of the landowner who had done nothing and spent nothing on the land; and when the leases fell in, he was able to charge double, or treble, or sometimes five times the previous ground-rent, the occupiers still remaining liable to pay the rates year by year for the maintenance of the services which created and kept up the value of the land.

The existence of economic rent is inevitable. No human power can prevent some pieces of land being more valuable than others. Nor does the existence of economic rent in itself necessarily involve any injustice. What is unjust is that it should be appropriated by individuals. For while the workers have to pay to landowners the whole surplus of their earnings above the level of what can be earned on the worst land in use, they are deprived of a large part of the wealth which they produce. The nature of economic rent is well shown by the illustration given by Patrick Edward Dove :—" If in the heart of London, a space of twenty acres had been enclosed by a high wall at the time of the Norman Conquest, and if no man had ever touched that portion

of soil, or even seen it from that time to this, it would, if let by auction produce an enormously high rent." That rent would represent land value, which would have arisen without a penny being spent or a stroke of work being done, on that piece of land. As Professor Thorold Rogers said :—" The landowner sleeps but thrives. He alone among all the recipients in the distribution of products, owes everything to the labour of others, contributes nothing of his own." This is as true of the complicated structure of the industrial world to-day as it was of the simpler and more direct exaction in the days preceding the French Revolution. " The widow is gathering nettles for her children's dinner; a perfumed Seigneur, delicately lounging in the Oeil-de-Boeuf, has an alchemy whereby he will extract from her the third nettle, and name it Rent."

If we could start life afresh, with the intelligence we now possess, but with our minds undimmed by generations of injustice which is so familiar that we are hardly able to criticise it, we should never allow a small class to monopolise the public fund which exists in economic rent. Any such proposal would be seen to be dishonest. Rather, we should admire and revere the

beneficence of Providence, which decreed that our united efforts should create and augment the value of the land for the common good; and we should rejoice at our good fortune in having side by side with our growing needs a growing purse with which to pay for them. For if the community does not derive a revenue from the value of land, public expenditure has to be met by taxes on the products and earnings of industry. As population grows and the needs of the community multiply, the burden of taxation on the workers is continually increased, in addition to the growing burden of private rent. If you build a much-needed house or improve an old one, you are taken before the rate-collector and fined as if you had committed a nuisance.

At present if a landowner keeps his land unoccupied, however valuable it may be, he pays no rates or taxes, and the deficiency has to be made up by the occupiers of other land. The result is that landowners find it easy and even advantageous to withhold land from uses to which it could be put with advantage to the community. Labour and capital are thereby debarred from operating in the most favourable circumstances, and are forced to spend themselves wastefully and unprofitably on any inferior opportunities



which may be available. With the increase of population, the demand for land increases. The owner knows that if he waits he will secure a still higher price or rent. And so he waits, and in the meanwhile the people who want to occupy the land, and all the other people who would derive employment and livelihood from the occupation, are kept waiting, cramped and overcrowded, or are driven on to worse and less suitable land. Land is needed for houses, for farming, for factories, and business premises, for plantations, for mining and quarrying, for all the stages of industry from the growth or extraction of the raw material from the earth up to the moment when the finished article reaches the consumer. While the full and prompt development of land of all kinds on fair terms is restricted by monopoly, the exertions of the workers are made less profitable; they are constantly prevented from making the best use of the opportunities provided by nature for the supply of their wants; and the standard of earnings is forced down to an unnecessarily low level.

But if, or so far as, economic rent were nationalised by the method of a tax on land values, the existence of rent, and any increase in the total land values of the

country, through the growth of the population and improvements in methods of production, would not involve any injustice, nor would its payment be any check to the growing prosperity of the community. The rent of land would be reserved for the benefit of the whole people, and any increase in the value of land would only occur side by side with the growing prosperity of the community. All the various kinds of land would become available for use as required, at the fair value—on such terms as fix themselves when a willing seller meets a willing buyer. The landholder would pay to the public so much rent as would be sufficient, and not more than sufficient, to ensure that the land would be put to its proper use. This payment would not in any case be more than each landholder ought to pay to the community as representing the value of the natural advantages with which he was entrusted by the community. With all possible opportunities for productive exertion open on the fairest possible terms—*i.e.* subject to the minimum rent which is compatible with the rights of others—every one would be able to obtain in full what his work was worth under the most favourable conditions possible.

At present the land monopolist provides

the employer with cheap labour, and is the main support of the system of capitalistic exploitation which the workers rightly seek to overthrow. While monopoly can dictate on what terms work may be done, and can prevent it being done at all except upon impossible terms, there is a chronic residuum of unemployed. The unemployed, driven by starvation to compete for the places of the employed, keep down wages. But the resources of nature, the natural opportunities for work and production, are such that under free conditions there need be no unemployment. With the improvement of methods of production and exchange, the wealth-producing capacity of the people increases at a much faster rate than the increase of population. With the land and its stores freely accessible to labour on fair terms, the opportunities for labour would be increased indefinitely. The resources of nature admit of further development so as to satisfy the needs of any increase of population which can be foreseen.

The margin of unemployed at any moment is not relatively great. If the opportunities for production were increased only 10 per cent., the unemployed problem would be practically solved. At any given moment now it may be that every 100 men are com-

peting for 95 jobs. Though the margin of unemployed may be small, its existence operates to keep down wages over the whole field of labour. If employment were increased 10 per cent., instead of 100 men competing for 95 jobs, there would be 105 jobs competing for 100 men. In that case wages would rise to what the work was worth; the worker would obtain for his labour the full value of the wealth produced by him.

But at present private monopoly is in possession, with every legal and executive and economic advantage. The work and lives of the many are controlled by the few. Employment is restricted, and under the stress of competition by unemployed men and the fear of being thrown out of employment themselves, workmen are obliged to sell their labour at less than the value of its product. Industry is disinherited, and exists only on sufferance. Monopoly knows well where its interest and power lie; industry is liable to be puzzled and side-tracked. Monopoly has the staying power : labour, even when best organised, must win quickly or lose, and seems driven to choose between the lightning sectional strike and the paralysing blow of a general stoppage.

In these circumstances, it is no wonder



that the workers, faced with the established wrong of private monopoly—resting not on reason or justice, but on force and selfish interest, not on freedom and equal rights, but on restriction and privilege,—should feel compelled to take a similar attitude. It seems inevitable for them to take their stand on sectional interests, and for each group to aim at gaining what they can for themselves by organised pressure. But there is a limit to what can be achieved by such methods, unless at the same time the general economic conditions which affect all labour and determine the production and distribution of wealth are altered for the better—unless the toll, which is levied on all industry is taken off, and the obstructions which hem in every kind of worker are removed.

Labour is now organising itself as never before for joint action. Solidarity is now its motto. But for this widening, unifying movement to give its full result, there should be a widening and consolidating, not only as regards tactics and methods, but as regards principles and objects. In support of their claims for higher wages and shorter hours, the workers should demand the restoration of the rights of the community in the land as the means by which the relief claimed can

be secured effectively and justly, and with benefit, instead of damage, to all other workers.

The fundamental cleavage in modern society is between industry and monopoly. The real struggle is between the producer and the exploiter. These are the really conflicting interests to-day—these and no others. One or other of these two interests must now give way. With the disappearance of private monopoly, the cause of conflict between members of the same community would cease. The interests of all sections of industry are mutual and not conflicting. The way for labour to secure its due return, and for the public to secure an adequate supply of commodities at fair prices, is to make all natural means of production accessible, without payment of toll to private persons. The rock-bottom principle on which a co-operative commonwealth must be based is the right of industry to develop the national assets under free and just conditions. Then the movement for a rural civilisation based on the utilisation of the land by associated industry would find its complement in a similar urban movement, and the two movements would be brought into that harmony which Æ. has foreshadowed.

Co-operative Wholesale Societies, gathering their supplies from jointly managed creameries, meat-dressing establishments, and depots of agricultural co-operators, and distributing their goods through a network of Co-operative Stores, would be able to develop their trade and production in close alliance with the Trade Unions or any other associations which the workers might form for their mutual benefit. In every branch of that great co-operative system, the workers would be their own masters, and would regulate their work on democratic principles. They would be free to produce in plenty and to enjoy in full. The evils of low wages and high prices would disappear together.

With the freedom and bargaining power coming from the opening up of all avenues of profitable employment, and with the increased wealth coming to them from their co-operative societies, the wage-earners in all trades and industries would have gained a standing and position enabling them to form partnerships or guilds to control their industries. With their combined resources, they would be able to set up factories and machines, and in that case the private ownership by other people of other factories and machines would give no power to

exploit labour. The system of capitalistic profits, working on cheap labour secured by a margin of unemployed, would be superseded. Irish fisheries are making a fresh start with the formation of co-operative fishing societies, which will enable the fishermen to procure suitable boats and to market their fish for their joint benefit. But for this, and for all other industrial development, an adequate system of transport, adapted to serve the needs of the community rather than to yield profit to a few, is essential.

Industrial progress in other countries has led to the restoration and development of water-ways. A vast scheme for through-traffic across Central Europe is now engaging attention. Where water-ways are maintained, they tend to keep railway charges down to a proper level. *Young Ireland* has reminded its readers that so long ago as 1715 the Irish Parliament passed a statute to encourage a scheme of inland navigation of national proportions, upon which the present navigation of the seven rivers, Shannon, Erne, Bann, Lagan, Barrow, Boyne, and Suir, is based. Such a system, if properly utilised, would be of great assistance to Irish tillage and industries. But under British control, the canals



in Ireland have been kept idle and weed-grown, in order that the railways might be fed with traffic at monopoly rates.

The railway wagons which bring British goods into the interior at cheap through-rates, are often returned empty, owing to the prohibitive tariffs against Irish traffic. The railway companies could pay dividends to their shareholders, but could only give an indifferent service to the public. So far as their profits were due to their monopoly privileges, the companies should in justice have been charged with a contribution to the public revenue in the shape of a rent or tax according to the value of those privileges. In some countries, such as the republics of South America, the State leases the railways to companies, which provide efficient services and earn substantial dividends for the shareholders, while the monopoly rent accrues to the public. But the main interest of the public is to get a cheap and improved railway service, and it is desirable that any surplus revenue of the railway undertakings should be devoted to the reduction of rates and extension and improvement of the service. It would therefore be desirable that the railways should be taken over by the nation and worked for the benefit of the public. This, which was

desirable in any case, has become almost inevitable in present circumstances.

Under the pre-war ownership and management of the Companies, the railwaymen suffered from low wages, long hours, and dictatorial treatment, and the public from ill-adapted service, wasteful management and high passenger fares and goods rates. Under the meddling control of the British Government and the apathy of the directors during and since the war, the Companies are now alleged to be in a state perilously like bankruptcy. According to their own account, their dividends can now only be paid out of a subsidy from the taxpayers, and they profess that if the railways are returned to them they will be unable to pay the increased wages necessitated by the present cost of living and to pay dividends or even to carry on the service without charging rates which would cripple the trade of the country. In these circumstances it becomes only a question of the terms on which the railways should be taken over by the nation, and it is clear that those terms cannot be a purchase on the footing of their past profits. Those profits have disappeared, and while they were made they were the result of monopoly privileges which never ought to have been a subject

of private property. To pay out the Companies on the basis of their pre-war profits would be to burden the new management with a crippling debt, which could only be discharged by underpaying the railwaymen and overcharging the public. On strict business principles, and apart from any consideration which may be due to investors whose livelihood might be threatened, the right of the companies to compensation should be restricted to the present value of their constructed works, their rails, stations and other structures, their rolling-stock and other moveable property. The question of compensation would then be reduced to reasonable limits, and the acquisition and working of the railways as a public trust would become a practical business proposition. The working of the railways as a unified system by some method of joint control might be expected to bring benefit both to the public and the railway staff.

Similar considerations apply to the coal and minerals which are placed in the earth, not for the exclusive benefit of a favoured few,† but for the use and enrichment of the

†It is notorious that in Great Britain the mining monopolists have levied a gigantic toll at the expense of the consumer and out of the deadly peril and underpaid toil and shocking home-conditions of the miners. According to the official evidence given

whole nation. It would be difficult to justify a claim for mining rents, wayleaves or royalties by persons who may never have seen the coal and minerals, and have done nothing to discover or work them. But even at the cost of paying some reasonable compensation, the nation should resume the full ownership of the coal and minerals, including those awaiting development, and should arrange on just terms for the working of existing undertakings and for the establishment of new ones, by persons, including the miners themselves, who have the necessary knowledge, experience and business capacity. Means of transport should be provided, and suitable housing accommodation. Then the mines could be worked in the interests of the whole community. The most economical use of the coalfields would be ensured by a unified system of development. The most favourable conditions for

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before the Coal Commission which recently sat in London, the profits of the colliery-owners rose from a pre-war average of £13,000,000 a year to a rate of £39,000,000 for the quarter ended September, 1918. But the miner's average income only rose from £82 to £169 for the same period, while the cost of living, according to the Ministry of Labour, rose 120 per cent. In addition to the profits of the colliery-owners to whom the coal is leased, the mining industry has to bear the burden of royalties, which so long ago as 1908 were estimated at nearly £10,000,000, paid to landowners.



output would be established by adopting a method of combined control, securing proper wages and hours of work. The public would get its coal without having the price increased to cover payments to dead-heads. If the price charged were such as to leave a surplus after proper remuneration of workers and managers, such surplus would accrue to the public as national income.

The ways in which re-afforestation and drainage works could be carried out for the common good have been considered in a previous chapter. The improvement and management of water-ways, harbours and docks are obviously matters to be undertaken at public expense, under public control and for the public benefit.

Advance along the lines which have been suggested has become imperative. The present social injustices are intolerable. The actual want, and dread of want, which beset the many in consequence of the unjust privileges of the few, have turned life for the most part into a body and soul-destroying struggle for the necessities of existence. Busybodies talk of reconstructing industry on the old rotten foundations. But the structure will not stand unless it is founded on freedom and justice.

To find a man's true place in the world is not for officials and supermen, but for each man himself. What is needed is to give each individual the freest scope under just conditions. He must not be the slave either of the capitalist or of the State. We must extirpate the special privilege which negatives the equal rights of all. The harmonising of the rights of the individual with the rights of the community, is the task which modern society has to undertake.

The restoration of the common right to the land must be the basis of the co-operative commonwealth. On that foundation, the new industrial order can be built by a free people. The natural abilities of the people, in free combination, will turn the natural resources of the country to the best account. While every one might live in comfort, yet no one could grow unduly rich, because he could not live on the labour of others without giving an equivalent return. There would no longer be any class interested in lowering wages or raising prices. All possible opportunities for productive exertion would be open on the fairest possible terms, that is, subject only to paying to the community so much rent as is necessary to adjust the rights of all in the common heritage, the

land. Commodities of all kinds would be as plentiful as the bounty of nature and the skill and energy of man can conspire to make them; and they would be obtainable at a price which would give a fair return for all services rendered in the course of their supply, but would not be swollen by any monopoly toll or profit. With security and plenty would come the possibilities of a fuller and nobler life for the present and all future generations of Irish men and women. The true co-operative commonwealth will be realised by uniting the greatest individual liberty of action with the common right to nature's bounties, and the equitable participation of all in the benefits of combined labour.

## VI.

### Rates and Taxes

PEOPLE complain of taxation, even when levied by the representatives of the majority; but they accept, as if it were a natural phenomenon, the collection of a tax of an unascertained amount in the form of rent, which is levied upon the majority by the minority. Social reformers and political economists cannot free themselves from the atmosphere of privilege, which they sucked in with their mother's milk. Born and bred in the world of to-day, and taking its advantages to themselves and their class as a matter of course, they can scarcely conceive the possibility of any other mode of life. The complexity of modern industry makes it difficult for the sufferers to trace effects to their causes. The plain man's mind is confused by the technicalities of tenure and taxation, and by the economics of rent, profits and wages. The workers are held fast in the spider's web spun by the monopolists and the lawyers. Vested interests have entrenched themselves and grown venerable with age.



In the earlier stages of civilisation, when life was simpler, any injustice or departure from the rules necessary for social health was more apparent, and steps could readily be taken to set it right. Indeed any departure from those rules meant speedy disruption from within and destruction from without. Under primitive conditions, the fact that the number, health and prosperity of the community depend on the proper use of the soil and its products, mineral and vegetable, is patent, and is not lost sight of (as it is sometimes to-day) owing to vast agglomerations of persons living in cities who seem at first sight to have little connection with the soil. Accordingly we find that in earlier ages the instinct for fairness and regard for the well-being of the community as a whole found expression in arrangements by which all its members had the right to use the land.

If Ireland had succeeded in maintaining its own land system—based on its earliest usages, modified by Christian teaching, guarded for centuries by kings and chiefs in accordance with the counsels of brehons and bishops, the sages of the law and the mouth-pieces of religion—an equally just system adapted to modern conditions, might have been evolved by natural growth—a

system which would have preserved the common right to the land, and at the same time would have allowed industrial and commercial development to proceed for the good of the whole community. Unfortunately, though the land remains indestructible, the ancient rights in it were destroyed. But Irish tradition and character survive, indestructible as the land itself; and they will enable social justice to be restored to-day, if the main principle is held fast and the complications of the problem are patiently disentangled.

Landlords have claimed the land of Ireland as their own, and have claimed to do as they like with their own, for their private advantage, so that even *Æ.* seems to shrink from putting them to the inconvenience of allowing their estates to be cultivated in the way necessary to provide food for the people. With the land largely starved of labour, and labour largely divorced from the land, wealth which might be produced is lost both to the community and to the family. The exactions and encroachments of landlordism, together with the tinkering measures taken to mend them, have produced an economic chaos in which values are distorted, and a moral fog in which rights are obscured.

In the country we have judicial rents, purchase annuities, and untenanted lands; congested areas and ranches; cultivators struggling to make small patches productive by carrying up soil onto the rocks of the mountains, or mixingsand and seaweed with the bog, while wide rich lands lie tenantless and uncultivated; tenants moved about like live stock by Boards and Commissions, and their lands redistributed over their heads; “uneconomic holdings,” and single acres purchased at the taxpayers’ expense for labourers, while thousands of acres are withheld from use; fields which might grow flax and beet as raw material for industry, abandoned to fatten cattle for export for the profit of a few; roads out of repair, railways run without regard to public needs, water-ways neglected, harbours awaiting development; the hill-sides bared of their forests, and closed against pasture to provide a few strangers with a few days’ sport in the year; the water-power of lakes and rivers running to waste; lands became sour from want of drainage and crops carried away by floods; no systematic attempt to utilise the turf of the bogs for fuel and bye-products and to re-claim the land for cultivation;—so that no one can say what would be the value of

the land if it came readily into use as required, or what would be the earnings of industry if it could get at natural resources on fair terms. In the towns we have vacant sites while the people are penned in slums, and ground-rents of a value which has never been ascertained, but of which we know that, while it arises from the activities and expenditure of the community, it goes into the pockets of private persons who have done nothing to earn it.

While these incidents of arbitrary ownership and alien meddling have grown up in a confused tangle, the position has been further complicated by the imposition of English rates and taxes in respect of the ownership or occupation of land and fixed property. Those charges do not affect any proper settlement between the landowner and the community. They are indeed a recognition of the right and necessity for the State to impose taxation on the holders of land, and they tend to fall to some extent, though only partially and irregularly, upon the owners of land, so that a proper tax on land values in substitution for them could not be objected to as an altogether new burden : it would in fact be a re-adjustment of an old burden, making it fall on the proper persons and in the right proportions.



But to a large extent these charges, although they were originally levied in part at any rate on the landlords, and although in their ultimate incidence they may tend still to fall to some extent on landowners, have been shifted on to the occupiers of land; and the basis on which they are assessed and levied tends to strengthen the power of monopoly, and give it a special inducement and foothold to strangle development.

The substitution of a tax on land values for the existing charges on owners and occupiers of lands and buildings, and so far as the proceeds of the new tax allow, for all other taxes on industry and its earnings, could be carried out gradually, by stages. The re-adjustment need not involve any personal hardship or dislocation of industry. The important thing is to declare the principle, and to begin putting it into practice. At every stage of the process of substituting the new taxation for the old the public would be recovering the revenue due to it, and would be sharing the relief which would come from freeing development.

In order to make clear the practical steps to be taken, and to understand the reasons for them, it is necessary to consider the

taxes and rates now imposed on land and fixed property in Ireland, and the grants-in-aid voted by Parliament, and the position created by the Land Purchase Acts.

Income Tax Schedule A. (Landlords' Property Tax) is payable on the annual value of all lands, tenements and hereditaments assessed in the same way as for local rates. The amount of the tax is now 6s. in the pound, with a scale graduated downwards when the taxpayer's income does not exceed £2,500. The gross amount of income brought under review for the purpose of this tax in Ireland for the year 1915—6 was £15,223,740.

The total rateable valuation of Ireland (exclusive of Government property) for the year 1916—7 was £16,119,399. The total amount received that year from rates was £4,136,013. In addition £546,274 was received in tolls, etc., £351,065 as rents, and £523,015 in other receipts (including contributions in lieu of rates on Government property). £2,706,810 was received from the poor rate in counties and urban districts, and £1,429,203 from municipal rates. This was supplemented by sums amounting altogether to £1,422,800 received as grants from the Exchequer and other Government sources, so that of the

total revenue of county and town authorities 76 per cent. came from local sources, and 24 per cent. from grants. The amount produced by rates represents an average of 5s. 1½d. in the pound on the rateable valuation of Ireland, and an average of 19s. 1d. per head of the population (4,377,000). The grants were equivalent on an average to 1s. 9¼d. per pound of rateable value, and to 6s. 6¾d. per head of population.

It is of importance to understand the nature of the valuation on which the Landlords' Property Tax and the local rates in Ireland are levied, and the basis on which grants-in-aid are distributed. Such valuation as exists in Ireland to-day has been made under the Valuation Act of 1852, and certain amending Acts. This valuation superseded the townland and tenement valuations which had been made for the old Grand Jury Cess in 1830, and for the Poor Rate under the Poor Law Act of 1838. The preamble to the Act of 1852 states that "it is expedient to make one uniform valuation of lands and tenements in Ireland, which may be used for all public and local assessments and other rating." The valuation made under this Act is what is commonly known as Griffith's Valuation. Each tenement or rateable hereditament was to be

valued separately, upon “ an estimate of the net annual value,” which was defined in regard to houses and buildings (including all farmhouses and farm buildings) as “ the rent for which, one year with another, the same might in its actual state be reasonably expected to let from year to year, the probable average annual cost of repairs, insurance, and other expenses (if any) necessary to maintain the hereditament in its actual state, and all rates, taxes, and public charges, if any (except tithe-rent charge) being paid by the tenant.” No corresponding definition was given with regard to land (*i.e.* land not covered with buildings), but it was directed that the net annual value was to be estimated “ with reference to the average prices of the several articles of agricultural produce” specified in the Act (wheat, oats, barley, flax, butter, beef, mutton, pork—the prices being taken from the general averages of forty market towns in Ireland during the years 1849, 1850, and 1851), “ all peculiar local circumstances in each case being taken into consideration, and all rates, taxes and public charges, if any (except tithe-rent charge) being paid by the tenant.”

The tenements and hereditaments defined



as rateable by the Act of 1852 and its amending Acts are as follows :—

(1) All lands and buildings, and all mines which have been opened for seven years, or re-opened for seven years after having been *bona fide* abandoned ;

(2) All commons and rights of commons, and all other profits to be had or received or taken out of any land ;

(3) Half the annual rent derived by the owner or other person interested in any tenements or hereditaments exempted by reason of being used for public or charitable purposes, or for purposes of science, literature, and fine arts (see Section 2 of Amending Act, 1854) ;

(4) All rights of fishery ;

(5) All canals, navigations, and rights of navigation ;

(6) All railways and tramroads ;

(7) All rights of way and other rights or easements over land, and the tolls levied in respect of such rights and easements, and all other tolls.

A proviso was inserted that “ no turf bog or turf bank used for the exclusive purpose of cutting or saving turf, or for making turf mould therefrom for fuel or manure, shall be deemed rateable . . . . unless a rent or other valuable consideration shall be payable for the same ” (Section 12). Any increase in the value of lands and hereditaments arising from drainage or reclamation, etc., was exempted from rating for

seven years after the drainage had been carried out. In the valuation of any "mill or manufactory or building erected or used for any such purpose," the water or other motive power thereof was to be valued, but the value of any machinery therein, "save only such as shall be erected and used for the production of motive power," was not to be taken into account (see Section 7 of the amending Act of 1860).

The valuation was carried out under the direction of Sir R. Griffith during the years 1852 to 1866. In the case of mines, quarries, and potteries, the receipts for an average of years were taken as a basis of valuation: similarly railways, canals, fisheries, waterworks, gasworks, etc. were valued on net receipts, and their valuation divided among the various rating areas in which they were situate, according to their respective values in each. In these valuations, allowance was made for interest on floating capital, tenants' profits, and depreciation. The Act of 1852 provided for a *general* revision of the valuation, but no funds were provided for the execution of such work, and such a general revision has never been made, with the result that the valuation has become quite out of date. The prices of the various articles of produce have changed, and there

have been changes in the cultivation of the separate holdings, and many alterations in the value of the land from other causes have taken place. The Act also provided for a revision of the valuation every year, and in accordance with the provisions of the Act of 1854, such annual revision is to be made in the case of—

(1) The rateable tenements and hereditaments the limits whereof shall become altered; and also of

(2) Rateable tenements and hereditaments, the annual value of which is liable to frequent alteration, such as fisheries, railways, canals, tolls of roads, bridges, mines, gas and water works, and buildings.

But in no circumstances, except where a clerical error is discovered, may the total valuation of the lands, independently of the buildings, be increased or lessened. In regard to new buildings which are included in the annual revision list, and those in which a structural change is made, it is the practice to make a deduction from the full annual value in order to bring the valuation down to the average level of Griffith's Valuation. The deduction varies in different districts from 5 per cent. to 30 per cent.

It is clear that the present valuation is no true criterion of the value of the land of Ireland as a whole or of the value of any particular piece of land. It does not disclose what is the total amount from which public revenue could be derived, or what amount would be payable in respect of any holding if contributions were fairly proportioned according to real value. As regards land not covered with buildings, whether in rural or urban districts, the valuation is based on the use which was being made of the land sixty years ago and on the prices of agricultural produce then current. No alteration has been made to meet the changes which have since taken place in the value of land generally or of particular holdings. The total valuation remains unaltered: all that is done is to split it up afresh and re-distribute it as the boundaries of holdings change. As regards houses and buildings, the valuation may be varied so as to record the rent for which the same might in their actual state be reasonably expected to let from year to year. If new buildings are put up or improvements are made in existing buildings, the assessment is increased. This of course acts as a penalty and deterrent on the building and improving of houses, which is so much required.



Landholders who undertake them have to pay more, while those who do nothing and allow their buildings to fall into neglect are correspondingly relieved from contribution.

It will be observed that the property is to be valued at what it would let for in its actual state. If a man keeps a dilapidated shanty on a valuable site, he is rated only on what the property would let for in its actual condition. Such a rent may be less than what the land by itself would let for as a cleared site, available for the erection of a suitable building, which would allow the value of the site to be realised. What is rated is not the value of the opportunity given by the possession of land, but the value of the use made of that opportunity. The result is to penalise and prevent proper use, and to encourage and reward abuse, to sterilise the land, and to keep the community out of the revenue which should be derived from it. This is true not only of land and houses in the ordinary sense, but of minerals, quarries, potteries, canals, and fisheries, the use of which is of great importance to the community, but which are assessed not on their true use value, but according to their actual receipts, if any, for the time being.

It is impossible to give an estimate of the

amount of land value which thus exists as an untapped source of revenue in Ireland as regards both rates and Income Tax, Schedule A, or to indicate, except in general terms, the loss and inconvenience caused by this irrational method of assessment. But a Return prepared by the English Local Government Board provides an exposure of the same system as it exists in England, even when the valuation is supposed to be up-to-date. About two-thirds (65 per cent.) of the land in urban districts is rated as "agricultural land," though held for very high prices and urgently wanted for housing and industrial purposes. Being kept out of suitable use, it is assessed at an insignificant amount. From the summary relating to 11 county boroughs and 1,065 other urban districts, with a population of 21,206,450, it appears that out of a total area of 3,884,139 acres an area of 2,533,035 acres is rated as "agricultural land" and contributes only £400,689 to a total rate contribution of £35,429,301. This is not a complete record, because there is not included in it the vacant land which is not assessed at all, nor the land assessed as private parks. But the record as it stands proves the immunity which is granted by the present system to owners who keep

valuable land unused or only partially used, and indicates the amount of revenue which goes untapped.

It is obvious that on any view the valuation in Ireland ought to be brought up-to-date, and that this would become more necessary than ever with the looked for revival of prosperity and increase of population and its natural expansion from congested areas and slums onto broad fertile acres and into urban and suburban dwellings with sufficient light, air and garden ground, and with the improvement of means of locomotion and transport. All such changes must affect the amount and distribution of land value, and the old stereotyped valuation of sixty years ago would become intolerably anomalous and inequitable. But experience shews that the old evils would remain if the old amounts were merely revised on the same principles of valuation. The anomalies and obstruction which arise under the present system are due to the principle embodied in the words "in its actual state," and to the lumping together in one assessment of the value of land on the one hand and of buildings and improvements on the other.

A new basis is necessary, on which the value of the land will be considered

apart from any buildings on it and improvements in it, and on which that value will be estimated having regard not to the use or non-use of the land at the moment, but to its fair value according to demand, that is, what an occupier would give for it if that piece and all other pieces of land were being offered freely for use. The distinction made by the present Valuation Acts between land covered with buildings and land used for agriculture is unscientific and misleading. Buildings cannot be treated as if they stood in the air : the site is an important part of the whole rateable tenement, and in some cases is worth as much as the building upon it. On the other hand, agricultural holdings, are something more than land ; they include all the improvements on or in the land—fencing, drainage, plantations, etc. The scientific and practically important distinction is between land value and the value of buildings and improvements. These two values, which are mixed up together to produce the present rateable value, are totally different in origin. There is strong reason in justice and policy for taxing one, and for not taxing the other. The effect of taxing the one is very different from the effect of taxing the other, both as regards



the incidence of the tax, and as regards the economic effect on the progress and prosperity of the community.

There remains the important question, by what persons these charges are payable. Income Tax Schedule A. (Landlords' Property Tax) is levied on the occupier, but if he is a tenant he has the right of deducting the tax paid by him or a proportionate part of it from his next payment of rent. If any property is unlet or unoccupied, the tax is remitted. Allowances may be made to landlords in respect of expenditure on repairs. To make this tax a fair and scientific one, this latter principle should be extended, by eliminating from the valuation the whole value attributable to work and expenditure on the holding. At the same time the basis of valuation should be changed by taking the real value of the land instead of the amount which it is yielding in its present condition.

With regard to rates, in earlier days the Grand Jury Cess was levied over the county, and was paid in nearly all cases by the tenant; and the Poor Rate (including many other local services) was levied partly over unions and partly over electoral divisions, and was payable in the first instance by the occupier, who, however, was authorised to

deduct from his rent one-half of the poundage rate for each pound of rent paid by him (provided that the deduction should not exceed one-half of the total amount of the rate), any contract to the contrary being expressly forbidden. The immediate lessor was given a like right of deduction against the superior landlord, if any. Besides the County Cess and the Poor Rate, Municipal Rates were levied in 120 towns in Ireland. The Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898, established representative Councils in every Administrative County and in every Urban and Rural District, which took over the powers and duties of the Grand Juries (except in judicial proceedings), and also some of the powers of the Boards of Guardians. The County Cess was abolished; and the Rates now existing in Ireland are (1) the new Poor Rate (not only for the expense of Poor Relief, but for all County and all Rural District Expenditure), and (2) Municipal Rates.

Under the Act of 1898 the Poor Rate is now (except where a house is let in separate apartments, and where a property is rated on half the rent on account of its public or charitable nature) wholly payable by the occupier, and contracts to the contrary are declared void. At the same time by the Act

of 1898 the landlords, following their usual tactics, threw off on to the taxpayers the one-half of the poor rate on agricultural land which they had previously borne. "Agricultural land" for this purpose means every hereditament entered as land in the Valuation List, which is not part of a railway or canal, and which was not, at the commencement of the Act, situate within an Urban District.

The course followed with regard to agricultural rates was typical. In 1896 the Death Duties had been equalised, by charging them on the capital value of land as well as of personal property. For this measure of justice the landlords in the English Parliament took reprisals by voting themselves a grant out of the taxes in relief of agricultural rates, and for Ireland at first a corresponding grant was made calculated at eight-ninetieths of the English share. In 1898 by the Irish Local Government Act this gift to landlords was increased five-fold by a new agricultural grant, amounting to £727,655 yearly, representing half the "standard rate" on agricultural land in the year 1896—7. This grant is charged on the Consolidated Fund, and paid out of the proceeds of the Estate Duty derived in Ireland

from personal property. This manœuvre of the landlords is referred to as follows by two members of the Royal Commission on Local Taxation (1902) :—" The feature of the Act, which was of the nature of a bargain, and which is irrevocable, was this : that whereas landlords had hitherto paid half the poor rate, they should in future be relieved of that liability. This relief was given for various reasons, but more especially in consideration of the risks which a more representative system of local government in Ireland would undoubtedly bring them. Consequently, all rates in rural districts (as well as most urban rates) are to be henceforth paid by occupiers, and this arrangement is admittedly beyond alteration."

Besides the Poor Rate, there are now in Ireland special Municipal Rates raised by County Borough Councils, Municipal Borough Councils, Urban District Councils, and the Town Commissioners of Towns not Urban Districts. These Rates are raised under several general Statutes and a large number of local Acts. They are all based on the same valuation as the Poor Rate, but they differ considerably in the proportions in which rates are imposed on different kinds of property. The Borough Rate,



imposed under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1840, in eleven Municipal Boroughs, is levied uniformly over all property. But for expenditure on public works and improvements, a system of differential rating is in force, with the idea of relieving agricultural land and other properties which are supposed to receive less benefit from the expenditure. Thus under the Towns Improvement Act, 1854, and the Public Health Acts the following properties are rated at one-fourth of their net annual value :—

(1) Land used as arable, meadow, or pasture ground only.

(2) Land used as woodlands, market gardens, or nursery grounds.

(3) Land covered with water and used as a canal and any towing path to the same.

(4) Railways (*i.e.* the lines, but not the stations).

And under the Act of 1898 lands, railways, and canals are assessed at only one-fourth of their valuation for expenditure on roads in Urban Districts; and in Belfast, under various local Acts, hereditaments of the annual value of £20 and under are assessed to the Police Rate at half the amount of the rate on hereditaments above £20 annual value.

With regard to Municipal Rates, the Act

of 1898 provides that "when the Council of any borough or other urban district or the Commissioners of any town independently of this Act can make any rate in respect of any hereditament upon the landlord or immediate lessor, and not on the occupier of the hereditament, such rate shall be made on the occupier of the hereditament," except where it is a house let in separate apartments, and except with regard to a rate under a local Act in any county borough "if the Council of that borough by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present at a meeting specially summoned for the purpose so resolve."

Thus the landlords of Ireland, both in town and country, by means of laws passed by their friends in the English Parliament, have thrown the burden of all local rates partly on the occupier and partly on to the taxpayer, notwithstanding the fact that the expenditure of the money so raised increases and maintains the value of their lands. It is true that the person who hands over to the tax-collector the money for a tax is not always the person who, in the long run, actually pays the tax. The law may of course provide, as in the case of the Landlord's Property Tax, that the tenant from

whom the tax is collected may deduct it from his rent. In other cases, without any such legal provision, it is known that the tax is passed on. Thus the tax upon tea is collected in the first instance from the tea importer. But no one supposes that the importer pays the tax out of his own pocket : it is known that he will add the amount of the tax to the selling-price of his tea : the true " incidence " of the tea-duty is therefore upon the consumer of tea.

Now rates are assessed upon the value of the property and collected from the occupiers, without any right of deduction from rent : on the contrary, in the case of the Poor Rate the Act provides that the occupier shall not be entitled to deduct it from his rent, and any contract to the contrary respecting such deduction shall be void. But mere legal enactment cannot altogether ensure where such a burden shall actually fall in the long run. In so far as rents are fixed by free bargain on a commercial basis, and rates are uniformly assessed, a tenant in agreeing to pay the rent of a house or a farm would take into account the rates payable by him. In such case the burden of rates or some part of it might in its ultimate incidence fall on the landlord, notwithstanding that the

rates were actually collected from the occupier. But it is impossible to say that such conditions prevail in Ireland to-day. In any case, the process of throwing back the burden would be uncertain and round-about, and would be hindered by the complications of the leasehold system. The tenant could not safeguard himself against an increase of existing rates or the imposition of new ones during the currency of his lease. Although in theory there may be a tendency for rates to fall upon owners in the long run, in practice the burden of a great deal of it never gets beyond the occupiers. At any rate the present system has the effect, and was intended to have the effect, of imposing every possible obstacle in the way of such tendency.

Whatever may be the truth of the above theory, the proper course is to re-impose the payment of rates directly on the owners of the land. If and so far as the burden now falls on them, there can be no harm in bringing the law into conformity with the fact, and directly effecting what would otherwise come about indirectly. If and so far as the burden now falls on tenants in addition to their rents, they ought to be relieved from paying twice over for their occupation of the premises. Rates ought to come out of



rents. But it is most important to notice that while rates are levied on the present rateable value there is no sure and effective way of fixing the burden on the landowners. This is also true of the Landlord's Property Tax, notwithstanding the tenant's right to deduct the tax from his rent. So long as rates and taxes are levied on the present valuation, which includes the value of both land and buildings, it is impossible to be sure who is really bearing the burden and to what extent—whatever may be laid down by statute, or by covenant between the parties. In theory, the burden should tend to settle on the landowner; in practice it does no such thing.

Indeed it is extremely doubtful whether the theory is true even as a theory except so far as concerns that proportion of the rates which is assessed on the value of the land. So far as they are charged in proportion to land value, rates do tend to come out of land value; they tend to become a burden on the landowner, which he cannot shift on to anyone else. But in so far as they are charged on buildings and improvements, which are produced by labour and capital, they tend to remain on the occupier, as the "consumer" of the buildings. Even if he did not pay them in the first instance, they

would find their way through onto him, just as the tea-duty finds its way onto the consumer. The occupier cannot have his house without paying the rate. If he pays the rate himself in the first instance he has no means of shifting it on to anyone else. If he rents the house from someone else who has to pay the rate in the first instance, the rate is added to the rent, and he has to shoulder the burden on taking the house. The producers and dealers in goods will not bear a tax on the goods: they cease producing and dealing, and the goods are not available, unless a price is paid which includes the tax. Rates on houses deter labour and capital from producing houses until the level of the price or rent of houses has risen sufficiently to cover the amount of the rates. They increase the cost of house-occupancy, just as the tea-duty increases the price of tea.

Under the present system of rating these natural tendencies are confused. Their operation is made uncertain and incalculable, and it is practically impossible to say exactly how the burden is actually borne in any particular case. But if local taxation were raised on a basis of land value and of land value only, it would be possible to levy rates directly on the

persons in enjoyment of the land value, and to be sure that they would not shift the burden on to the rent-paying occupiers. The burden would remain where it was placed by law, and where it ought in justice to lie. It would be just, because land value is the true measure of the benefits arising from the expenditure of the rates. It would be effective, because it would not involve any circumstances enabling the landowner to pass on the burden to anyone else.

So far from enabling the landowner to pass the tax on to the tenant in the shape of an increased rent, the system of levying on land value would have the contrary effect of reducing rent generally. In all bargaining the pull would be on the side of the tenant, instead of as at present on the side of the landlord. The rent which a landlord can get depends on the competition for the land and on the amount of other land which is available. The present system enables landlords to force up rents by withholding land from use; a tax on land values would put an end to that practice, and would reduce rents generally. The land would remain there as before; the only effect of the tax would be to bring it more freely into the market, and to make the landlord willing to take less, rather than more, for its use. The fact of

the landlord having to pay such a tax would not enable him to increase his rent any more than the fact of his having to pay a rent-charge or interest on a mortgage enables him to increase it. If the rent-charger or the mortgagee or the State takes more, less is left for the landlord. The burden of rates, therefore, could be re-imposed effectively upon the receivers of land value, to the relief of occupiers and industry generally, by assessing all land on its real value.

Some of the objections to the present rating system may be summarised as follows. The test laid down by the existing law—the rent at which the property in its actual state of occupation might reasonably be expected to let from year to year—allows small houses and business premises, which are let for short periods at competitive rents, to be charged up to the last penny, but leaves large houses and private grounds and unused lands assessed considerably below their real value. In other cases the test is practically impossible of application, *e.g.* the thirty acres of Trinity College in the heart of the city of Dublin. In such cases, if the question were, what is the value of the site, it could be easily answered; but insoluble difficulty, leading to serious



injustice to other ratepayers, arises from the attempt to say what such premises in their actual state of occupation would let at from year to year.

Again, under the present system poorer districts have an undue burden cast on them, and it is impossible to raise sufficient money without inflicting intolerable hardships. For example, Glenties Union, on the Atlantic coast of Donegal, had in 1891 a population of 34,319. On that figure the rateable value of the district per inhabitant is only 13s., and the rate in the £ for Union Charges on hereditaments other than agricultural land for the year 1899—1900 was 3s. 4d., although the Guardians' expenditure was extremely economical and out-relief was almost negligible. On the other hand, Dunshaughlin in Meath, a rich grazing district, had in 1891 a population of only 8,593, and on that figure the rateable value of the district per inhabitant is £12 5s., and the rate in the £ for Union Charges was only 11d., although the administration was very expensive. The inequality of the burden is in no way redressed by the system of grants-in-aid. The grants-in-aid of Union Charges amounted to only 1s. 3d. per inhabitant in

Glenties, whereas in Dunshaughlin they amounted to 7s. 6d.

Lastly, the present system penalises and prevents development. Take an acre of land in the suburbs of a city. It is at present vacant, in which case it will be exempt from rates altogether, or it may be used for grazing and assessed at a few pounds, on which assessment the owner pays only a few shillings in rates, and if the land was outside the urban boundary in 1898, he pays only half that amount, because the land is "agricultural land," although the demand for houses in the overcrowded city has really given it a considerable building value. At length the owner lets the land to a builder, who spends some hundreds of pounds in making roads and drains, and some thousands of pounds in building, say, twenty houses, which are assessed for rates at their letting value. The builder, if he is not to be at a loss, must let these houses at a rental which will cover not only the ground rent and interest on the cost of laying-out and building, and an annual sum for insurance and repairs, but also some hundreds of pounds a year for rates. Meanwhile the owner of an acre adjoining is still keeping it unbuilt on, although there is still an unsatisfied demand for houses. This acre is worth the

same as the acre built on, and could be let for the same ground-rent. But whereas the acre which is built on has to pay some hundreds of pounds a year in rates, the acre unbuilt on will pay only a few shillings. If both acres were rated on the same value, can it be doubted that we should have more and cheaper houses?

In a Memorandum as to the working of taxation on the unimproved value of land both for State and Municipal purposes in New Zealand, Mr. P. Heyes, Commissioner of Taxes, wrote (July, 1906):—"The effect on urban and suburban land has been very marked. It has compelled owners to build or sell to those who would; it has thus caused a great impetus to the building trade. The tendency of this system of taxation is not to increase rent, but, on the contrary, as the tax becomes heavier it tends to bring into beneficial occupation land not put to its best use, and so reduce rent, the improvements being entirely free from all rates and taxes. The effect has been to cause vacant sites being put to their best use, by expenditure on improvements. The exemption of all improvements led to a very liberal outlay of capital on land, which has rapidly increased as the system was extended to local rating, and thus increased

he demand for labour." The Town Clerk of Wellington (Mr. John R. Palmer) in his Annual Report, 1902—3, to the Mayor and Councillors of the city said :—" The result of the first year's trial of this system must be considered a gratifying one. That which was claimed by its exponents has been amply fulfilled; it encourages improvements, stimulates the use of land, secures the unearned increment to those who have added the value. It is only stating a fact to say that much, if not all, of the activity of the building operations of the city and surroundings during the past year is due to the influence of this healthy measure."

In Queensland all local rating is on land value, except in the case of certain special properties. In Western Australia there is rating on land value by the Road Boards. In Sydney under the Corporation Acts, all the rating of landed property is on the land value basis, and buildings and other improvements are rate-free. In the rest of New South Wales land value rating takes place under the Local Government (Shires) Act, 1905. On this the Hon. T. A. Coghlan, Agent-General for New South Wales, wrote in June, 1909 :—" Landowners have been wise enough to see that it is only the unproductive land that feels the burden of the



tax, and there is general agreement that the first effect of placing rates on land has been to force much hitherto unproductive land into use. The people of New South Wales are well satisfied with the change that has taken place."

What is true of the building trade is true of all other trades and employments. Everywhere and in all occupations, in consequence of the present system which gives immunity to land so long as it is unused and puts crushing burdens upon anyone who begins to use it, land of all kinds is slower to come into use, whether for sites or as a source of raw material, than it would be if it were taxed all the time on its true value, and no additional burden were put upon its use. Buildings and fixed plant are requisite for manufactures. But anyone who puts up a factory or pulls down an old one and erects on the same site a new one of double capacity fitted with the latest motive power is liable to have his assessment doubled. *The Machinery User* recorded that when a firm of rope manufacturers in Sunderland improved their power-plant, the rating authorities "advanced the assessment of the firm by £500 per annum, because it was contended that the introduction of the Diesel engines and

the buildings to hold them had enhanced the value to this extent."

In the same way rural development is impeded by the increased rates payable by occupiers who put up new farm buildings or improve old ones. And if the present valuation of agricultural land in Ireland were simply brought up to date on the old basis, it is clear that the pressure of rates would stand in the way of any policy aiming at an increase in the number of holdings and the more intensive cultivation of land for food production. In England the promotion of small holdings has been greatly retarded by the increase of rates which under the present system takes place on their new creation. A farm in Cambridgeshire was assessed at £150; the County Council let it to twenty-seven small holders and the assessment was raised to £580. But if rates were assessed on land value, there would be no such increased burden in consequence of land being put to better use, having more men employed on it, and more food produced from it. More holdings would come into use, and all holdings would be worked to greater advantage. The "Norwegian Association of Farmers and Small-holders" has passed a resolution as follows:—

“ As the working people produce the wealth of the country, the small-holders cannot, any more than other workers in the country, hope to attain better life conditions by other means than by their own ability, and by such laws that secure the small-holders themselves and all other citizens against encroachment and exploitation. The small-holders, therefore, do not demand preferential treatment at the charge of other classes of society, but they do demand . . . . Abolition of all hindrance authorised by law to the use of land. Repeals of laws which impede wealth-producing labour, stimulate anti-social speculation, and thus artificially cause high prices. Access to land on such conditions that secure the rights of the individual as well as the rights of the community. . . . A reform of taxation by which the land values, that are not due to the work of the individual but the growth of the community, shall be taken for the benefit of the whole community instead of, as at present, to be the foundation of unearned wealth in private possession. Abolition as soon as possible of direct and indirect taxation on labour and necessities of life. The small-holders call upon the whole working population to join them in these demands.”

## VII.

### Practical Steps

EVIDENCE as to the unsatisfactory working of the present rating system is to be found in the Commissions and Committees which have heard and acknowledged the grievances of the ratepayers. Hand-to-mouth expedients have been adopted in the shape of subventions and grants-in-aid out of taxes, which have confused the public accounts without providing any adequate relief. These expedients failed, because they did not recognise that the evil lies in the present basis of assessment, and that the remedy lies in establishing a better and juster measure of contribution.

The grants in aid of local taxation voted by the English Parliament have been made ostensibly for the relief of the hard-pressed ratepayer. But whatever the motive may have been, they have proved to be a method by which money is transferred from the pockets of the people generally into the coffers of the landowners. This was obvious in the case of the agricultural grant to pay



the landlords' share of the rates on agricultural land. But the result is substantially the same in the case of the whole complicated system of subventions and grants, amounting to about a million and a half yearly (whether from the general Exchequer, the Death Duties, the Beer and Spirit Surtaxes, or the Licence Duties), which are applied in aid of Poor Relief, Road Maintenance, Technical Education and Intermediate Schools, Labourers' Dwellings, Workhouses and Dispensaries, Sanitary Officers, and Pauper Lunatics.

As regards any future financial policy in Ireland, it should be noticed that the objection to the subventions and grants is not only that they do not place the burden on the value of land, where it ought to lie, but also that they are not administered in a way to give relief where it is required, or in the proportions in which it is required. Notwithstanding all the grants-in-aid, the occupying ratepayer in Ireland remains grievously overburdened, and in the West of Ireland the need for relief is specially grave and urgent. The poorer districts have an almost hopeless struggle against bankruptcy, and the piece-meal and casual relief doled out in periods of special distress has been quite ineffective, while the

comparatively wealthy districts have received from the grants more than they required. In the administration no regard is paid on the one hand to the necessity for expenditure in the district, nor on the other hand to the ability of the district to contribute towards that expenditure. The grants are not apportioned even according to such criterion as is afforded by the ratio of rateable value to population, as shewn in the instance given in the previous chapter of the amount of grants received by Glenties and Dunshaughlin respectively.

In the case of the grants for Pauper Lunatics, Medical Officers and Medicines, Workhouse School Teachers, and Sanitary Officers, each Union receives a fixed proportion of its expenditure. If, instead of that system, each Union received such a sum as would reduce its own expenditure on these purposes to a sum equivalent to the average Union poundage of, say, one penny in the pound on the land values of the Union, more assistance would be given to the Unions which stand greatly in need of it, and the anomaly would be avoided of giving disproportionately large sums to Unions which do not need assistance so much.

The Death Duty Grant is distributed between Guardians and Road Authorities,

in each case in proportion to the expenditure thirty years ago. The grants pay no regard to the varying needs of different Unions. The Guardians' share of the grant, if spread equally over Ireland, would give about 6d. per inhabitant, but in fact some of the most necessitous Unions receive much less, *e.g.*, Swinford in Mayo receives only about  $2\frac{3}{4}$ d. per inhabitant, while richer Unions receive more than the average, *e.g.*, Rathkeale, Croom, Kilmallock, and Dunshaughlin receive 1s., 1s. 1d., 1s. 2d. and 1s. 4d. per inhabitant respectively.

The Agricultural Grant is equal to half the rates on agricultural land in the standard year 1896—7. The relief given by the Grant is in proportion to rateable value, and it follows that land of low value receives a small grant, and more valuable land a larger grant. The largest grants are given where they are least wanted; and trifling, almost useless, grants are given where more relief is urgently needed. Out of the total grants-in-aid, Cahirciveen (Kerry), with a rateable value of £1 2s. per inhabitant, receives 1s. 10d. per inhabitant, while Delvin (Westmeath), with a rateable value of £5 14s. per inhabitant, receives 5s. per inhabitant, and Dunshaughlin (Meath) with

a rateable value of £12 5s. per inhabitant, receives 7s. 6d. per inhabitant.

The hardships of the present system are indeed admitted. Ratepayers feel where the shoe pinches, and have found that attempts to make it fit better do not really ease them. The shoe itself wants re-modelling. The rating system by itself is admittedly unsatisfactory, and has broken down. The grants have failed in their object, because they are not distributed in such a way as to make the remaining burden of rates which falls upon the ratepayers in different districts proportionate to their ability to meet it. They have failed because they have not established any better basis than the old rateable value as the measure of what each ratepayer and each district should contribute towards the common expenditure. Any tinkering at the problem, whether by grants out of taxes or by any attempt to re-adjust the burden of the present rates, must be futile, so long as the present basis of assessment is retained.

Land value is the criterion of ability to contribute to the common fund required by the needs of the community. The present rates are far more burdensome on properties and districts where the land value is low and where the charge falls more



heavily on buildings and improvements, and development is thereby arrested. If the land value basis were taken, this injustice would disappear. On a land value basis, properties and districts which contribute to a common charge would pay more or less according as their land value was high or low. The same rate in the pound on land values would produce a larger contribution from the naturally rich lands of Meath than from the poor lands of Donegal. The ratio between the land value and the population of a district affords the true measure of ability to provide the funds necessary for proper administration. Just as the true method for proportioning the burden on each ratepayer to his ability to pay, is to levy the rates on land value within each local area; so the real method for equalising the burden of necessary expenditure as between districts, is to make a levy on land value over the whole country and to distribute the proceeds between the districts according to their needs.

It is obvious that under the present system too large a share of the cost of keeping up the main roads falls upon the rural communities. This cost will increase with the development of commercial traffic and the use of heavy motor vehicles. Much less

expensive roads would satisfy merely local requirements. The rural districts also bear too large a share of the cost of maintaining the old and feeble and sick; and when Ireland provides its own proper system of elementary education, the proportion of the cost which would fall on the poorer districts under the present system of local taxation would be unduly heavy. Ireland will properly require a certain standard of education to be maintained for all its children, and for such a purpose the cost ought to be shared equitably over the whole country. The same considerations apply to any funds which may be required for the upkeep of a suitable police throughout the country, and for the maintenance of medical officers and asylums and sanitoriums. All the above services are really national in character, and though the local authorities may remain responsible for the administration of them and perhaps for raising part of the cost of them, the national Government must exercise control and supervision, and the cost, or the bulk of it, should be provided by a tax levied over the whole country.

As regards the strictly local services of sanitation, etc., and improvement charges, which directly increase and maintain the

value of land where the services are maintained and the improvements made, it is clear that their cost should be met by rates levied on land values, and that in such case each property would contribute in proportion to the benefit it received from the expenditure.

It follows, therefore (1), that the basis of assessment for all public services now defrayed out of rates and grants should be land value; (2), that local services should be defrayed by rates levied by the local authorities on the land values within their areas; and (3), that the cost of the services which are national in character should be defrayed by a tax on land values levied by the national Government over the whole country, the proceeds being allotted to the local authorities according to the needs of their districts.

The naturally more fertile and productive districts should in justice pool their higher land values with those of the naturally poorer districts for the purpose of meeting the common national expenditure for the good of all. Again every town derives much of its land value from the activities of the rural community—its food producers and customers — outside its boundaries. Dublin land is made valuable,

not only by the expenditure of its own Council and by its own local industries, but also because it is the seat of the national Government, and because of the concentration of the legal business, the finance, and the commerce of the country within its area. The seaports and fishing harbours owe their land values not only to their resident population, but to the passengers, consignors, distributing agencies, and customers scattered throughout the country. Banks, lawyers, doctors, established in the towns, depend on their country clients. The business and richer residential quarters of a city depend on the factories and the workers whose homes may be situated in a different administrative area. The village shop is a link in the chain which connects the agricultural labourer with the wholesale houses and shippers, and helps to make valuable the city warehouses, offices, docks and quay sides. So complete and so complicated is the interdependence of one citizen upon another that it is impossible to define exactly the share which any one class or locality has in the creation of the land values of each district. The practical solution is to be found in appropriating for the nation so much of the land value of the country as is required for the upkeep of



national services, and leaving the local authorities to make local levies on the land values of their districts for their strictly local services.\*

To enable this policy to be carried out, owners should be asked to supply particulars of their lands and to give an estimate of the land value. Local authorities could obtain these particulars for their own districts, and could check the owners' valuations, and make any valuations where the owners failed to submit estimates. The National Land Department would receive copies of these valuations, and a small staff

\*The Australian Commonwealth levies a Federal Tax on the unimproved value of land, which for the year 1916—7 yielded a revenue of £2,121,847. Each of the Australian States has also a State tax on the unimproved value of land within its boundaries, the revenue from which source in the various States for the year 1915—6 aggregated £887,222. The land value taxes in Australia, therefore, are now yielding a total of about £3,000,000 a year, which, on a population of slightly under five millions, works out at the rate of about 12s. a head. These figures do not include the revenue raised by the local rates on land values, which probably yield at least as much as that amount. Senator Grant, speaking in the Commonwealth Parliament, estimated the total amount raised in the year by taxes and rates in Australia at more than £7,000,000.

The amount raised by the taxation of land values in New Zealand amounts to about £1,500,000 a year, which, on a total population of about 1,165,000, works out at nearly 30s. a head. This does not include the amount raised by the local rates on land values. Rating is now on a land value basis in about 130 counties, districts, and boroughs, including Wellington and Christchurch.

of trained surveyors would enable it to supervise the returns so as to secure uniformity and to deal with any appeals which persons interested might make from the assessments of the local authorities. A complete inventory of the land and national resources would thus be compiled from which the Government, with the assistance of the local authorities, could consider and encourage ways and means of re-settlement, housing, and utilisation of resources, and could see that suitable schemes were carried out everywhere enabling all the members of the community to participate fairly in the development of their district. The national Government would also sanction the levies and supervise the expenditure of the local authorities, and arrange with them for the allocations from the national fund for the national services entrusted to local administration.

The land should be valued as if it were divested of buildings, erections, and structural improvements, and of woods, shrubs, fruit trees, and any other thing growing thereon, except grass or any other natural herbage or growth, and in the case of agricultural holdings, exclusive of the present value due to ploughing and sowing and any other things done in the ordinary course of

husbandry, and of any work of reclamation, embanking, making up, levelling, draining and the like, where the benefit thereof is unexhausted at the time of valuation, *i.e.*, where the value of the improvement has not merged in the value of the land, as a test for which it might be provided that the work must have been executed within thirty years of the time of valuation. There should be included in the valuation the benefit of any license or monopoly privilege. No deduction should be made in respect of any fixed charges or encumbrances on the land. Provision should be made for periodical revision of the valuation on the same basis.

A true annual land value might be arrived at by ascertaining the annual rent which the land would command if it were let on continuous tenure, free from all restrictions and conditions, except the obligation to pay the annual rent. But such a method might risk confusion with the present "annual value," which is based on the rent obtainable for the property if let for a year in its existing condition. Moreover as a result of the present obstructive system of tenure and rating, the amount at which a piece of land could actually be let at present does not always

include the full value of the land which could be obtained if it were sold outright. In any case the rent at which a piece of land can be let varies with the length of the term and the conditions of the lease. For these reasons, in present circumstances, the price at which the land could be sold is a better standard of its real value than the rent at which it could be let. Moreover, the capital or selling value of land has been adopted in Australia and New Zealand as the basis of assessment for the local and national taxation of land values. It is therefore suggested that in the first instance at any rate the valuation should be of the capital or selling value of land.

Where there is only one person interested in the land value, that person should pay the full amount of the tax. In the case of farms and town-holdings let direct by the owner to a tenant at a full rent, the charge would fall wholly upon the landlord. But in cases where there may be intermediate leasehold interests and where there may be more than one person interested in the land value, each person should be charged with his share of the tax in proportion to his interest in the land value for the period for which the tax is levied. As existing leases



expire, all such complications would disappear. On the expiration of a lease, any part of the tax which had been payable by a tenant would become payable for the future by the lessor, and would remain payable by him notwithstanding any subsequent grant of a lease by him. In the case of all leases granted after the beginning of the tax, the lessor would be liable directly to pay the tax, and any covenant purporting to relieve him of that liability should be void.

The pressure of having to pay the land value tax continuously would result in landlords granting continuing tenancies, and would thus bring about the security of tenure which farmers and town-tenants require. Parasitic interests would gradually disappear, and there would be left only the occupiers holding the land on secure and continuous tenure, subject only to paying the fair value of the land. These conditions would also prepare the way for the purchase by the tenant of any buildings or improvements which belonged to the landlord, so that eventually occupiers would possess their holdings in full and complete security as their own, subject only to paying a fair rent for their land to the

community. They would be free to erect any new buildings and make any improvements without the risk of their value being confiscated by landlords, and without incurring any liability to pay increased rates or taxes in respect of them.

The case of the town tenants would thus be provided for, and also that of the tenants of agricultural holdings now holding at a rent. With regard to the latter class of holdings, it is important to remember that the agricultural land in Ireland unaffected by the Land Purchase Acts extends to 5,768,751 acres, or 30 per cent. of the total agricultural area, and has a Poor Law Valuation of £3,645,278, or 36 per cent. of the valuation of the total agricultural area. The land values of these 5,768,751 acres still go into the pockets of the monopolists. If these values were drawn on by taxation in the manner proposed, the tenants would be relieved from the rates which they now have to pay. At the same time, as the pressure of the tax brought more land into use, rents would tend to be reduced to a fair level, and the tenants and their families would have fresh opportunities to extend their present holdings and acquire new ones. As compared with the holdings which have been

purchased under the Acts, the unpurchased lands include a disproportionately great number of the larger tenanted holdings and of the large holdings of untenanted lands, as well as the landlords' demesnes and home farms. These have a large dormant value, which at present goes to waste. This new source of revenue would be tapped by the land value tax, and at the same time more land would be thrown open for better cultivation.

The land sold under the Purchase Acts comprises 308,833 holdings, and extends to 10,202,910 acres, and has a Poor Law Valuation of £5,185,712. The total purchase money amounts to £100,208,684. The total advances made for land purchase since 1870 up to 31st March, 1917, amounted to ninety-eight-and-a-half millions. The difference between these last two amounts was provided by the purchasers in cash. Some of the advances have been redeemed by the purchasers. The annuities payable on the advances not so redeemed amount to over two-and-three-quarter millions. There are pending, but uncompleted, agreements for the sale of 100,890 holdings, comprising 3,302,941 acres, and having a Poor Law Valuation of £1,207,875. The total

purchase money for these holdings is £23,936,053. Where purchases have been completed, the monopolists have been eliminated, although at a price. To that extent the right of the people to the land has been restored. The points that still require solution with regard to these holdings concern the relations (1) between the English Government which has guaranteed certain payments to the ex-landlords on the one hand, and the new Irish Government on the other hand; and (2) between the new Irish Government on the one hand, and the tenant-purchasers on the other.

As to (1). Under the various Purchase Acts the English Government has become liable to pay to the ex-landlords as a bribe, in addition to the purchase annuities payable by the tenants, a large amount for "excess stock" and "bonus." The liability under this head up to 31st March, 1917, amounted to £735,000 per annum payable until the capital charge is amortised. This annual sum is now paid as to £160,000 out of the Vote for the Ireland Development Grant, and as to £593,000 out of the Land Commission Vote. The same charge in respect of "pending cases" is estimated at not less



than £580,000. Any further payments on this account are clearly an English obligation, which the English Parliament should be left to settle.

As regards future payment of the purchase-annuities, which are also guaranteed by the English Government, and the arrangements for which were carried out by the English Government in order to save and convert into cash the vanishing power of their landlord garrison to levy tribute on the Irish people, justice would seem to require that England should shoulder also this debt. The Irish nation might justly dispute the rightfulness of such a sale of part of its proper heritage to a small class of persons mostly resident outside the country, and might justly claim to repudiate any liability in this regard. But in view of the fact that in the terrible circumstances of the time the Irish representatives in the English Parliament lent themselves as consenting parties to these deals; and for the purpose and on the condition of a fair and final settlement of accounts between the two nations—Ireland might be willing that the question of payment of the outstanding purchase-annuities should be taken into consideration.

But in any such settlement there would have to be taken into account the ruinous toll that has been exacted from Ireland by English landlords for centuries, and the amount of the taxes levied in Ireland by England towards maintaining its army of occupation and military police and prisons and dealing with the poverty created by its misrule. Account would also have to be taken of the appalling total of the sums abstracted from Ireland by over-taxation on any view of the case during the last hundred years. Mrs. Green says in *Irish Nationality*:—"The tribute from Ireland to England in the last ninety-three years, over and above the cost of Irish administration has been over 325,000,000—a sum which would probably be much increased by a more exact method both of recording the revenue collected from Ireland and the "local" and "imperial" charges, so as to give the full Irish revenue, and to prevent the debiting to Ireland of charges for which she is not really liable. . . . In 1896 a Financial Commission reported that the Act of Union had laid on Ireland a burden she was unable to bear; and that, in spite of the Union pledge that the ability of Ireland to pay should always be taken into

account, she was paying one-eleventh of the tax revenue of the United Kingdom while her taxable capacity was one-twentieth or less." Further, England destroyed the manufactures and commerce of Ireland, and English landlordism devastated her with famine and wasted away her population by enforced emigration. For all these things, restitution is due to Ireland of an infinitely larger sum than is involved in the outstanding purchase-annuities. In these circumstances it is difficult to see with what shew of justice England could claim to throw upon the new Irish Government the liability to pay for future years to the ex-landlords the value of the land which forms the rightful property of the Irish nation.

As to (2)—the arrangement to be made between the Irish Government and the tenant-purchasers—the position of the tenant-purchasers must not only be safeguarded, but must be improved. They must be guaranteed all their existing rights, and at the same time must be given the opportunity of sharing in the benefits which a new and juster system of taxation would confer on the whole working population. They should have the right to maintain their present position, *i.e.* to continue to

pay—for the future, to the Irish Government—their purchase-annuities, and a contribution equal to the amount of the rates and taxes which they now have to pay in respect of their holdings. In the alternative, they should be given the right to elect to continue in permanent undisturbed possession of their holdings, subject only to paying the annual land value to the community, and free from the purchase-annuities and from all rates and taxes or other charges in respect of their holdings. In the case of tenants who have paid cash in part payment for their holdings or have redeemed their purchase-annuities, credit might be given for such payments against the amount of the annual land value which would otherwise be payable by them to the community. Credit might also be given if and so far as the annuities hitherto paid have been in excess of the annual land value of the holdings.

If this choice were offered to them, there can be little doubt that the latter alternative would be the more advantageous, and would be chosen by them. The majority of the purchased holdings are of small acreage, and their value is made up to a much greater extent of buildings and improvements than



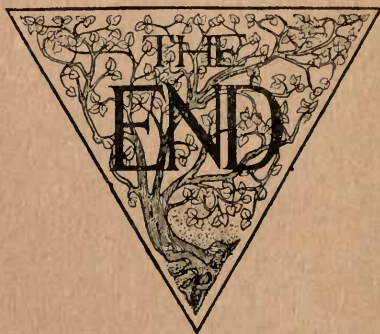
is the value of the larger tenanted holdings and the large untenanted holdings which remain unsold. In the latter case the land value forms a much larger proportion of the total value of the holding, and on the land value basis these lands would pay a correspondingly larger contribution, which would reduce the contribution to be received from the smaller tenanted holdings.

Further, the tenant-purchasers, equally with all other families of cultivators, would get the benefit of the opening up of fresh lands to cultivation under the influence of the tax. Such opportunities for themselves and their sons to acquire fresh land on fair terms would open out a more satisfactory future to the tenant-purchasers than the prospect before them under present circumstances. To secure the rights of all, precautions should be taken against a fresh accumulation of large estates in the hands of monopolists. On the sale of a farm by a tenant-purchaser, he would of course be entitled to receive any increased value which was due to his own work and expenditure; but the new purchaser should become liable to contribute in respect of the land value arising from other causes. Otherwise the people might find themselves again shut

out from their land, and a new class of landlords might divert into their pockets the value which should belong to the people.

If the policy outlined above were adopted, the Irish nation would be on the road to recover the value of its land for the common good of its entire people. The transfer of the present charges upon land and fixed property on to the new basis of land value is urgently necessary from many points of view of policy, and could be effected in the way proposed without hardship or disturbance. Such a transfer would help to bring back the land into proper use. It would give a fresh start to industry of all kinds. It would increase the earnings of families, and at the same time allow the value of the land to be realised and grow naturally for the benefit of the nation. It is not suggested that this reform alone would suffice, without other measures being taken by the Government, and by the people in voluntary association, to revive national prosperity. The co-operation of all citizens along many lines of effort will be necessary to rebuild the fortunes of Ireland. The real motive power will be provided by such patriotic effort. But it is contended that such effort would only produce chequered results, and would allow

the evils, from which other countries suffer, to plague Ireland also, unless a just system of tenure and taxation were established from the beginning. The distrust of the old politics, which is voiced by Æ. and others, is natural and reasonable. But on the fundamental matters of land tenure and taxation laws are necessary, and it is of vital importance that they should be sound; and the new Irish Government may be trusted to have only one object—to frame those laws for the good of the whole nation.













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